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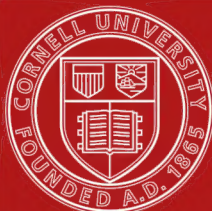
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THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

By H. DE BALZAC

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE

ALBERT SAVARUS

PAZ

MADAME FIRMIANI



Maximilien Guyon

Maximilien Guyon

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THE WORKS
OF
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY
KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

VOLUME IV

ALBERT SAVARUS
PAZ
MADAME FIRMIANI. THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT
A DOUBLE LIFE
THE PEACE OF A HOME
A DAUGHTER OF EVE. A COMMISSION IN LUNACY
THE RURAL BALL

Illustrated

By M. GUYON, GEORGES CAIN, AND ST. REJCHAN

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ALBERT SAVARUS.

TO

MADAME ÉMILE DE GIRARDIN.

ONE of the few salons in which the archbishop of Besançon presented himself during the Restoration was that of Madame la Baronne de Watteville, whom he particularly liked on account of her religious sentiments.

One word about this lady, — the most important female personage in Besançon.

Monsieur de Watteville, a descendant of the famous Watteville, the luckiest and the most illustrious of murderers and renegades (his extraordinary adventures are too well known historically to need relating here), — Monsieur de Watteville of the nineteenth century was just as gentle, as tranquil, as his ancestor of the great epoch was fiery and turbulent. After living all his life in La Comté, like a woodlouse in the crack of a panel, he married the heiress of the celebrated family de Rupt. Mademoiselle de Rupt added an income of twenty thousand francs from landed property to the ten thou-

sand francs a year, also from landed property, of the Baron de Watteville. The arms of the Swiss nobleman (the Watteviles are Swiss) were quartered on those of the de Rupts. This marriage, arranged in 1802, took place in 1815, during the second Restoration. Three years after the birth of a daughter, all Madame de Watteville's grandparents had died, and their property was divided. Monsieur de Watteville's house was then sold, and the family took possession of the fine mansion of the de Rupts in the rue de la Préfecture, the vast garden of which extended as far as the rue du Perron. Madame de Watteville, who was pious as a young girl, became devout after her marriage. She is one of the queens of that saintly fraternity which gives to the highest society of Besançon the gloomy tone and the prudish manners which harmonize so well with the character of the town.

Monsieur le Baron de Watteville, a spare little man, thin, and dull in mind, seemed to be used up without apparent reason why he should be, for he was gifted with a crass ignorance. But as his wife was a warm blonde, with a nature so repellent that it became proverbial (they still say in Besançon "sharp as Madame Watteville"), certain wits in his own social sphere were wont to declare that he had worn himself out against that rock, — "Rupt" being evidently derived from *rupes*. Scientific observers will

not fail to note that Rosalie was the sole offspring of the marriage.

Monsieur de Watteville passed his life in a luxurious workshop, engaged in turning. As an offset to this vocation he had taken up a fancy for collecting. To those medical philosophers who make a special study of madness, the disposition to collect is the first stage of mental alienation, showing itself in little things. The Baron de Watteville collected the shells and geological fragments of the vicinity of Besançon. A few critics, women especially, said of M. de Watteville, "He knows what he is about; he saw from the time of his marriage that he could never get the better of his wife, so he flung himself into a mechanical occupation and the pleasures of good eating."

The Rupt mansion was not without a certain splendor, worthy of the times of Louis XIV., and it bore signs of the nobility of the two families united in 1815. An old-fashioned luxury pervaded it, which was not like that of the present day. Crystal chandeliers designed in the form of leaves, brocaded hangings, carpets everywhere, gilded furniture, were all in harmony with the old liveries of the elderly servants. Though served on dingy family silver, round a centre-piece of glass bearing Dresden china, the food was exquisite. The wines, chosen by Monsieur de Watteville (who, to vary the monotony of existence, was his own butler), had

what might be called a departmental celebrity. Madame de Watteville's fortune was now considerably augmented; while that of her husband, consisting of the estate of Rouzey, bringing in, as we have said, ten thousand francs a year, had not been increased, like hers, by inheritance. It is unnecessary to call attention to the fact that Madame de Watteville's intimacy with the archbishop drew to her house the three or four distinguished or clever abbés who were attached to the archbishopric and were not averse to a good table.

At the assembling of a dinner-party, given on the occasion of some wedding early in September, 1834, and just as the women had gathered in a circle round the fireplace and the men were standing in groups near the windows, a general acclamation broke forth as Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey was announced.

"Well, how about the suit?" they cried.

"Won!" replied the vicar-general. "The judgment of the court, of which we despaired, you all know why—"

This was an allusion to the composition of the Royal court in 1830; nearly all the legitimists having resigned their places in it.

"—has been given in our favor on all points, and reverses the judgment of the lower court."

"Every one thought you would lose your case."

"And so we should if it had not been for me. I

sent our lawyer to Paris, which enabled me to engage at the last moment the services of another man, to whom we owe our success, — an extraordinary man.”

“In Besançon?” asked Monsieur de Watteville, innocently.

“In Besançon,” replied the Abbé de Grancey.

“Yes, Savaron,” remarked a handsome young man named de Soulas who was sitting by Madame de Watteville.

“He sat up five or six nights, studied the briefs and documents, had half a dozen interviews with me, each lasting several hours,” resumed Monsieur de Grancey, who now made his appearance at the hôtel de Rupt for the first time in twenty days, “and it has ended by Monsieur Savaron completely beating the distinguished lawyer our opponents brought from Paris. The young man was really marvellous, so the council tell me. Our Chapter is doubly victorious, — victorious legally and politically too, because we have beaten liberalism in the person of the chosen advocate of the municipality. ‘Our adversaries,’ said Monsieur Savaron, ‘cannot expect to obtain connivance everywhere for the ruin of archbishoprics.’ The judge was forced to demand silence, for the audience applauded. So, the ownership of the old convent remains with the Chapter of the cathedral of Besançon. Monsieur Savaron invited the Paris lawyer to dinner as we left the courtroom; the

latter said, in accepting, 'All honor to the victor!' and congratulated him without the least resentment."

"Pray where did you unearth that lawyer?" said Madame de Watteville. "I never heard his name mentioned."

"You can see his windows from here," replied the vicar-general. "Monsieur Savaron lives in the rue du Perron; the garden of his house adjoins yours."

"He does not belong in La Comté," said Monsieur de Watteville.

"He seems to belong nowhere," said Madame de Chavoncourt; "no one knows where he comes from."

"But who is he?" persisted Madame de Watteville, taking the arm of Monsieur de Soulas to lead the way into the dining-room. "If he is a stranger, what brought him to Besançon? It seems a strange thing for a lawyer to do."

"Very strange!" repeated young Amédée de Soulas, whose biography here becomes necessary for the full understanding of this history.

From time immemorial France and England have exchanged airy nothings, all the more persistently because the tyranny of the custom house cannot reach them. The fashions which we call English in Paris are called French in London, and *vice versa*. The enmity of the two nations ceases at two points,—on the question of words, and on that of clothes. "God save the king"

— the national air of England — was composed by Lulli for the chorus of either “Athalie” or “Esther.” The pannier petticoats, brought by an Englishwoman to Paris, were invented in London (all the world knows why) by a Frenchwoman, — the famous Duchess of Portsmouth. Paris began by laughing at them; so that the first Englishwoman who appeared in the Tuileries thus encased came near being crushed by the mob. But the fashion was adopted for all that, and it tyrannized over European womankind for half a century. After the peace of 1815 Paris laughed for a year at the long waists of the Britannic ladies, and went to see Pothier and Brunet in “The Funny Englishwomen;” but in 1816 and 1817 the belts of the Parisians, which cut their bosoms in 1814, had come down by degrees till they defined their hips. For the last ten years England has been making us little gifts of language. In place of the former *incroyable, merveilleux, élégant*, — three heirs of the *petit-mâîtres*, the etymology of which is more or less indecent, — we now say “dandy” and “lion.” The “lion” did not produce “la lionne.” That term came from the famous song of Alfred de Musset: —

“Avez-vous vu dans Barcelone

C'est ma maîtresse et ma lionne.”

There has been a fusion, or, if you like, confusion between the two terms and their dominant ideas.

When some nonsense amuses Paris — which is eager after nonsense as it is after masterpieces — it cannot be supposed that the provinces should refrain from getting hold of it. Therefore, as soon as the “lion” appeared in Paris, with his mane, his beard, his moustache, his waistcoats, above all, his eyeglass held to his eye without the aid of hands by a contraction of cheek and eyebrow, the chief towns of several departments beheld the glory of sub-lions, who protested, by the elegance of their apparel and the straps to their trousers, against the slipshod habits of their fellow-citizens. Thus it happened that Besançon enjoyed, in 1834, the presence of a lion in the person of Monsieur Amédée-Sylvain-Jacques de Soulas, spelled “Souleyas” at the time of the Spanish occupation. Amédée de Soulas is perhaps the only descendant of a Spanish family in Besançon. Spain sent her sons to do business in La Comté, but few Spaniards settled there. The Soulas remained because of their connection with Cardinal Grandvelle. Young de Soulas was constantly talking of leaving Besançon, — a melancholy, devout, unliterary town, a garrison town, the manners and morals of which may be worth depicting. This avowed intention on his part enabled him to live, like a man uncertain of his future, in three rooms, very slightly furnished, at the end of the rue Neuve where it joins the rue de la Préfecture.

Young Monsieur de Soulas could not get along with-

out a tiger. This tiger was the son of one of his farmers, — a squat little fellow of fourteen, named Babylas. The lion dressed his tiger very well, in a short iron-gray coat buckled in with a polished leather belt, blue plush breeches, a red waistcoat, varnished boots with tops, a high hat with broad hat-band, and gilt buttons bearing the crest of the Soulas family. Amédée gave the lad white cotton gloves, his washing, and thirty-six francs a month, for which the tiger fed himself, — a sum which seemed enormous to the grisettes of Besançon. Four hundred and twenty francs to a boy of fourteen, not counting presents! The presents consisted in the sale of his old and mended clothes, a *pour-boire* when Soulas exchanged a horse, and the stable manure. The two horses, managed with the strictest economy, cost, one with another, eight hundred francs a year. The sum total for the lion's supplies from Paris, consisting of perfumery, cravats, jewelry, boot-polish and clothes, came to twelve hundred francs. If to this you add groom, that is, tiger, horses, immaculate linen, and a rent of six hundred francs, you will find a total outlay of three thousand francs a year. Now the father of young Monsieur de Soulas had left him an income of only four thousand, the product of a few rather poor farms, all requiring outlays, which outlays caused the lion painful uncertainties in the matter of revenue; so that he could scarcely count on more than three francs

a day for his maintenance, his pocket-money, and for cards. In consequence of this he dined out frequently, and breakfasted with remarkable frugality. When he was absolutely forced to dine at his own expense, he sent his tiger to a restaurant for a couple of dishes of food — not to cost more than twenty-five sous for the two. Young Monsieur de Soulas had the reputation of extravagance, — he was thought capable of committing “follies ;” whereas the poor fellow could only make both ends meet at the end of the year by an astuteness, a genius for management, which would have made the fame of a good housekeeper. People were ignorant in those days, especially at Besançon, how much six francs’ worth of boot-polish, yellow gloves at fifty sous a pair, cleaned (in profoundest secrecy) to make them serve three times, cravats at ten francs which lasted three months, four waistcoats at twenty-five francs, and trousers strapped below the boot, cut into a capital. How should it be otherwise, inasmuch as we see women in Paris paying particular attention to empty-headed fellows who visit them and get the better of really remarkable men by reason of those frivolous advantages which may be bought for fifteen louis — including hair-frizzing and fine linen shirts.

If this unfortunate young man seems to have become a lion on rather cheap terms, you must know that Amédée de Soulas had been three times to Switzerland,

twice to Paris, once from Paris to London. He was regarded as an intelligent traveller who could say: "In England, when I was there," etc. Dowagers would remark to him: "You who have been in England," etc. He had even gone as far as Lombardy, and skirted the Italian lakes. He read the new books; and while cleaning his gloves his tiger Babylas was told to reply to visitors: "Monsieur is studying." This led some conservative Besancians to endeavor to depreciate him with the remark: "He is a man of *advanced ideas*." But Amédée possessed the faculty of enunciating with true Besancian gravity the commonplace remarks of the day, and this gave him the reputation of being one of the most enlightened members of the aristocracy. He wore fashionable jewelry, and in his head he carried such thoughts as were put into it by the newspapers.

In 1834 Amédée was twenty-five years old, of medium height, dark complexion, broad chest, strong shoulders, thighs somewhat too round, feet already fat, hands white and dimpled, with a chin beard, moustachios that rivalled those of the garrison, a good-natured fat face, rather ruddy, a flattened nose, brown eyes without expression, and nothing Spanish about him. He was advancing with great strides towards an obesity which would certainly prove fatal to his ambitions. His finger-nails were well cared-for, his beard carefully trimmed, and every article of his clothing was kept

with a nicety that was truly English. Thus it came to pass that Amédée de Soulas was considered the handsomest man in Besançon. The hair-dresser, who came to him daily at a regular hour (another luxury, costing sixty francs a year), held him up as the sovereign arbiter of elegance and fashion. Amédée slept late, made his toilet, mounted his horse at twelve o'clock, and rode out to one of his farms to practise with a pistol. He laid as much stress on this occupation as Lord Byron in his later years. Then he returned to Besançon about three o'clock, admired as he rode along by all the grisettes and such persons as happened to be at their windows. After his pretended studies, which lasted till four o'clock, he dressed to dine out, spent the evening playing whist in various salons of the Besancian aristocracy, and went home to bed at eleven o'clock. No existence was ever more undisguised, more virtuous, more irreproachable in every way, for he punctually attended the church services on Sundays and feast-days.

To make the reader understand how this mode of life could have wounded the proprieties, it is necessary to give a brief explanation of Besançon. No town offers a more stolid, dumb resistance to progress. At Besançon the administration, the public employés, the military, in fact all who belong to the government and who are sent from Paris to occupy any post whatever,

are designated in a lump by the expressive term "colony." The colony is neutral ground, — the only ground where, as at church, the aristocratic society and the bourgeois society ever meet. Here begin, apropos of a word, a look, a gesture, hatreds of family to family, feuds between bourgeois women and aristocratic women, which last till death, and widen the already impassable ditch by which the two societies are separated. Excepting the families of the Clermont-Mont-Saint-Jean, de Beaufremont, de Scey, de Gramont, and a few others who live exclusively on their estates in La Comté, the Besancian nobility dates back only two centuries, to the period of the conquest of Louis XIV. This society is essentially parliamentary, with a pride, stiffness, gravity, assumption, haughtiness, which can be compared with no others, not even those of the court of Austria; for in these qualities the Besancians could abash every salon in Vienna. As for Victor Hugo, Nodier, or Fourier, the true glories of the town, no one ever thinks of them; they are never mentioned. The marriages of the nobility are arranged while the children are still in their cradles, — so carefully are all things planned, the least as well as the greatest. Never has a foreigner, an outsider, contrived to slip into any of these houses; and it requires efforts of diplomacy such as Prince Talleyrand might be glad to know and profit by in a congress, before the colonels and titled

officers in garrison, many of them belonging to the noblest families in France, can be admitted. In 1834 Amédée was the sole individual in Besançon who wore straps to his trousers. This will explain why young Monsieur de Soulas was a “lion.” But perhaps a little anecdote will make you thoroughly understand Besançon.

Not long before the time at which this history begins, the Préfecture had occasion to send to Paris for an editor for its journal, — it being necessary to protect that paper against the “little Gazette” which the “great Gazette” had lately hatched in Besançon, and also against the “Patriot” in which republicanism was rampant. Paris sent down a young man, quite ignorant of La Comté, who led off in a column of local items in the style of the “Charivari;” whereupon the head of the administration sent for the journalist and said to him: “You must understand, monsieur, that we are grave, — more than grave, dull; we do not wish to be amused; we are furious when made to laugh. Let your writings be as hard to digest as the heaviest lucubrations of the ‘Revue des Deux-Mondes;’ and even then you will hardly attain to the tone of the Besancians.” The editor took the hint and wrote thenceforth a philosophical patois, most difficult to understand. He met with complete success.

If young Monsieur de Soulas did not fall in the esti-

mation of the salons of Besançon it was out of pure vanity on their part; the aristocracy was not unwilling to appear to modernize itself in the person of one of its own members, and so present to Parisian nobles who might visit La Comté a young man who was in some degree like themselves. But as for Amédée, all his hidden labor, the powder he flung in the eyes of society, his apparent follies, his latent wisdom, had an aim; otherwise the Besancian lion would not have been born in Besançon. Amédée wished to make an advantageous marriage by proving at the right time that his farms were not mortgaged, and that he had laid by some money; but he also wanted to make himself a figure in society; he wished to be thought the handsomest as well as the most elegant of men in order to win the notice and eventually the hand of Mademoiselle Rosalie de Watteville.

In 1830, when young Monsieur de Soulas began his career of dandyism, Rosalie was fourteen. In 1834 Mademoiselle de Watteville was reaching the age when young girls are easily struck by just those peculiarities which called the attention of society to Amédée. Many lions make themselves lions for the sake of their schemes and speculations. The Wattevilles, who for twelve years past had had an income of fifty thousand francs, did not spend more than twenty-four thousand francs a year, although they received the upper society of

Besançon on Mondays and Fridays. On Mondays they gave a dinner, on Fridays an evening party. Consequently, it was easy to calculate the amount of twenty-six thousand francs laid by annually for the last twelve years, and invested with the sagacity which distinguished the old nobility. It was generally believed that Madame de Watteville, thinking herself rich enough in lands, had invested her savings in the three-per-cents in 1830. For the last five years, therefore, the lion had worked like a mole to reach the upper regions of that stern woman's good-will, all the while behaving in a manner calculated to flatter the vanity of Mademoiselle de Watteville. The baroness was in the secret of the many devices by which Amédée was able to keep up an appearance in Besançon, and she esteemed him the more for them. Soulas had put himself under her wing when she was thirty years old, and at that time he had the courage to admire her and make an idol of her; he even reached the point of relating to her (but to no one else) the broad stories which some canting women are fond of hearing, enabled as they are by their own high virtue to look into the pit without falling, or to finger the meshes of the devil without entanglement. Do you now see why this lion did not allow himself the slightest intrigue? He made his life as plain as day; he lived, as it were, in the streets, so as to play the part towards the baroness of sacrificing such things,

all the while regaling her mind with sins she denied to her flesh. A man who has the privilege of slipping questionable tales into the ear of a *dévoté* is always charming in her eyes. If this exemplary lion had known human nature a little better he might, without danger, have allowed himself a few love-affairs among the grisettes of Besançon who regarded him as a king ; his intimacy with the stern and prudish baroness might even have been promoted thereby. To Rosalie this Cato seemed extravagant ; he professed elegance ; showed her in perspective the brilliant rôle of a fashionable woman in Paris, where he proposed to be sent as deputy. These sagacious manœuvres were crowned with success. In 1834 the mothers of the forty noble families which composed the upper Besancian society cited young Monsieur Amédée de Soulas as the most charming young man in Besançon. No one ventured to dispute his position in the hôtel de Rupt, and all Besançon regarded him as the future husband of Rosalie de Watteville. In fact, a few words had already been exchanged on that subject between the baroness and Amédée, — the utter insignificance of the baron giving certainty to their plans.

Mademoiselle Rosalie de Watteville, to whom her fortune (which would some day be enormous) gave much importance, brought up within the circle of the hôtel de Rupt, — which her mother rarely quitted, so

attached was she to the dear archbishop, — had been from her earliest childhood sternly repressed by an exclusively religious education, and by the despotism of a mother who controlled her rigidly by principles. Rosalie knew absolutely nothing. Is it knowing anything to have studied geography in Guthrie, sacred history, ancient history, French history, and the four rules, — all passed through the sieve of an old Jesuit teacher? Drawing, music, and dancing were forbidden, as more likely to corrupt than to embellish life. The baroness taught her daughter every possible stitch in needlework and embroidery, — plain-sewing, satin-stitch, drawn-work. At seventeen years of age Rosalie had read nothing but “*Les Lettres édifiantes*” and works on the science of heraldry. Her eyes had never been contaminated by a newspaper. She heard mass every morning in the cathedral, to which her mother took her, returned to breakfast, made a little turn in the garden, and then took her work and sat beside the baroness, who received visits till dinner time. After dinner, unless it were Monday or Friday, she accompanied Madame de Watteville to the houses of their friends, — not, however, saying anything but what the maternal orders sanctioned.

At eighteen, Mademoiselle de Watteville was a delicate, thin girl, — flat, blond, white, and insignificant to the last degree. Her eyes (of a pale blue) were

improved by the play of the eyelids, which, when lowered, threw shadows on the cheeks. A few reddish spots injured the whiteness of her forehead, which was well modelled. Her face was exactly like those saints of Albert Dürer and the painters who preceded Perugino, — the same plump shape, though slender, same delicacy saddened by ecstasy, same stiff naïveté. Everything about her, even her attitude, resembled those virgins whose beauty is not perceived in all its mystic lustre except by the eyes of a thoughtful observer. She had handsome hands (though they were somewhat red), the prettiest of feet, — the feet of a lady of the manor. As a usual thing, she wore gowns of a simple cotton material; but on Sundays and fête days her mother allowed her to put on silk. The fashion of her clothes, which were made in Besançon, made her almost ugly; whereas her mother endeavored to borrow grace, beauty, and elegance from Paris, whence she obtained every article of her own dress and toilet, thanks to the services of young Monsieur de Soulas. Rosalie had never worn silk stockings or boots, always cotton stockings and leather shoes. On gala days she had a muslin gown, her hair was dressed, and she wore bronze kid shoes.

This training and Rosalie's modest air and manner concealed an iron nature. Physiologists and profound observers of human nature will tell you, to your great

amazement, perhaps, that temperaments, characters, mind and genius reappear in families at long intervals, precisely like what are called hereditary diseases. Thus talent, like gout, often skips two generations. We have proof of this phenomenon in the illustrious instance of George Sand, in whom are revived the vigor, power, and congenital qualities of Maréchal Saxe, her grandfather. The determined nature, the romantic audacity of the famous Watteville had returned to earth in the soul of his great-niece, where they were strengthened still further by the tenacity and pride of the blood of the Rupts. But these virtues, or defects, if you prefer to call them so, were as deeply hidden in the soul of this young girl, apparently so soft and yielding, as the boiling lava is hidden in the breast of a mountain before it becomes a volcano. Madame de Watteville alone may have suspected this legacy of two bloods. She was so stern in her treatment of Rosalie that she replied one day to the archbishop, who blamed her harshness: "Let me manage her, monseigneur; I know her,—she has more than one Beelzebub under her skin."

The baroness watched her daughter all the more closely because she considered her credit as a mother at stake. Besides, she had nothing else to do. Clotilde de Rupt, then thirty-five years of age, and virtually the widow of a man who spent his life turning egg-cups

out of every kind of wood, intent only on making circles of six lines in iron-wood, and snuff-boxes for all his acquaintance, coquetted, in due propriety, with Amédée de Soulas. When this young man was at her house she would often send her daughter from the room and then recall her, trying to detect some impulse of jealousy in that young soul, for the purpose of subduing it. She was like the police in their treatment of Republicans ; but she only wasted her efforts. Rosalie never showed the least signs of revolt. Then the cold *dévoté* would reproach her for want of feeling. Rosalie knew her mother well enough to be certain that if she did show any liking for young Monsieur de Soulas she would bring a sharp reprimand upon her head. Therefore she replied to all her mother's provocations with speeches very improperly called jesuitical ; for the Jesuits were strong, and these reticences are only breastworks behind which timidity shelters itself. At such times the mother accused the daughter of dissimulation. If, unluckily, a flash of the real Watteville and de Rupt nature showed itself, the mother demanded the reverence that children owed to parents, to reduce Rosalie to passive obedience. This secret battle went on in the inmost recesses of domestic life, behind closed doors. The vicar-general, that dear Abbé de Grancey, the friend of the late archbishop, wise as he was in his capacity as grand penitentiary of the diocese, could not

discover whether this struggle had roused a hatred between mother and daughter, whether the mother was jealous in advance of the daughter, or whether the suit paid by Amédée to the daughter through the mother had gone beyond the prescribed limits. In his position as friend of the family he did not confess either the mother or the daughter. Rosalie, too often beaten, morally speaking, on account of young Monsieur de Soulas, could not, to use a familiar phrase, endure him ; so that, whenever he addressed her with an attempt to capture her heart she answered him coldly. This repugnance, visible only to the eyes of her mother, was a perpetual subject of admonition.

“Rosalie, I do not see why you affect such coldness to Amédée ; is it because he is the friend of the family, and is agreeable to us, your father and me ?”

“Why, mamma,” said the poor girl, one day, “should not I be blamed still more if I treated him kindly ?”

“What is the meaning of that ?” cried Madame de Watteville. “What do you mean by those words ? Your mother is unjust, is she ; and in your opinion she would be in any case ? Let me never hear such an answer to your mother again,” etc.

This quarrel lasted three hours and three quarters. Rosalie remarked upon it. Her mother became white with anger and ordered her to her room, where Rosalie

studied the meaning of the scene, without finding any — so innocent was she. Thus it was that young Monsieur de Soulas, whom all Besançon believed to be very near his goal, cravats displayed, boots polished, — the goal which had compelled him to use so much black wax for his moustache, so many pretty waistcoats, horse-shoes, and corsets (for he wore a leathern girth, the corset of lions), — Amédée, we say, was no further advanced in his suit than the next comer, though he had on his side the worthy and noble Abbé de Grancey. At the time when this history begins, however, Rosalie did not yet know that the young Comte Amédée de Soulas was her destined husband.

“Madame,” said Monsieur de Soulas, replying to the baroness while the very hot soup in his plate was cooling slightly, and affecting to give a quasi-romantic tone to his narrative, “one fine morning the mailcoach brought to the Hôtel National a Parisian, who, after looking about for lodgings, finally took the first floor of Mademoiselle Galard’s house in the rue du Perron. Then the stranger went straight to the mayor’s office and made his declaration of domicile; after that he put his name down on the roll of barristers before the Court, and presented his credentials; he also left a card on all his fellow lawyers, the members of the administration, the counsellors and the judges, on which card appeared the name of — Albert Savaron.”

"The name of Savaron is celebrated," remarked Mademoiselle de Watteville, who was strong in heraldry; "the Savarons of Savarus are one of the oldest, noblest, and wealthiest families in Belgium."

"He is a Frenchman without descent," replied Amédée de Soulas. "If he takes the arms of Savaron de Savarus, he must add the bar sinister. There is no other Savarus in Brabant now than a rich heiress who is not married."

"A bar sinister is of course the sign of illegitimacy; but the illegitimate son of a Comte de Savarus is noble," returned Rosalie.

"That's enough, mademoiselle," said her mother.

"You were determined she should know heraldry," remarked Monsieur de Watteville, "and she knows it well!"

"Pray go on, Monsieur de Soulas," said the baroness.

"You can understand that in a town where all is classed, defined, known, settled, marked, and numbered, like Besançon, Albert Savaron has been received by his fellow-lawyers without difficulty. They contented themselves with saying: 'Here's a poor devil that doesn't know Besançon. Who on earth advised him to come here? What does he expect to do? And then, to send his card to the magistrates instead of calling in person! What a blunder! So, at the end

of three days not another word about Savaron ! He has taken the former valet of the late Monsieur Galard, — Jérôme, — who knows a little about cooking. Monsieur Savaron is all the more forgotten now because no one ever sees him or meets him."

"Does n't he go to mass?" asked Madame de Chavoncourt.

"He goes on Sundays to Saint-Pierre, but always to the first mass, at eight o'clock. He rises every night between one and two and works till eight, when he breakfasts ; then he works again. He walks in the garden, and goes round it fifty or sixty times ; after which he dines and goes to bed between six and seven o'clock in the evening."

"How do you know all that?" asked Madame de Chavoncourt.

"In the first place, madame, I live in the rue Neuve, at the corner of the rue du Perron ; I look out on the house where this mysterious personage is now residing ; then there are protocols mutually passing between my tiger and Jérôme."

"Do you converse with Babylas?"

"What else can I do during our rides?"

"How came you to choose a stranger for your lawyer?" said Madame de Watteville, addressing the vicar-general.

"The chief-justice played a trick on him," replied

Monsieur de Grancey, "and appointed him to defend before the court of assizes an almost idiotic peasant accused of forgery. Monsieur Savaron got the poor man acquitted by proving his innocence, and showing that he was merely the tool of the real criminals. Not only did his method triumph, but he obtained the arrest of two of the witnesses for the prosecution, who have since been found guilty. His speeches had a great effect on the court and jury. One of the latter—a merchant—trusted Monsieur Savaron with a delicate case the very next day, and he won it. Placed as we were, and finding it impossible for Monsieur Berryer to come to Besançon, Monsieur de Garcenault advised us to employ Monsieur Albert Savaron, and predicted our success. As soon as I saw him and listened to him I had faith in him, and I was not mistaken."

"Is there anything extraordinary about him?" asked Madame de Chavoncourt.

"Undoubtedly, madame," replied the vicar-general.

"Then do explain it to us," said Madame de Watteville.

"The first time that I saw him," said the Abbé de Grancey, "he received me in the next room to the antechamber (the former salon of old Galard), which he has had painted in old oak; the walls are entirely covered with law-books contained in book-cases also painted in old oak. This painting and the books were

the only luxuries in the room. The furniture consisted merely of a secretary in old carved wood, six old chairs covered with tapestry, brown curtains with green borders at the windows, and a green carpet on the floor. The stove in the antechamber warmed the room. While waiting I had no expectation of seeing a young man. This singular frame proved to be completely in harmony with the figure it surrounds. Monsieur Savaron entered, wearing a black merino dressing-gown, tied round the waist with a red cord, red slippers, a red flannel shirt, and a red cap —

“The devil’s livery!” cried Madame de Watteville.

“Yes,” said the abbé, “but a splendid head; black hair mingled with a few white threads, such hair as we see in Saint Peter or Saint Paul in our pictures, thick shining masses, wiry as a horse’s mane; a throat round and white as a woman’s; a magnificent forehead with one furrow down the centre of it, the furrow that grand projects, high thoughts, deep meditations imprint on the foreheads of great men; an olive complexion marbled with red; a square nose, eyes of fire, the cheeks somewhat hollow, marked with two long wrinkles — signs of suffering; a sardonic smile, a small chin rather too short, crow’s-feet about the temples, cavernous eyes rolling under the arched eyebrows like globes of fire; but with it all, in spite of these indications of violent passions, a calm air, deep resignation, a voice

of penetrating sweetness, which afterwards astonished me in the courtroom with its flexibility, — the voice of an orator, sometimes pure and candid, sometimes insinuating, but thundering when necessary, or lending itself to sarcasm — when it became incisive. The man is of middle height, neither stout nor thin. He has the hands of a prelate. The second time I called upon him he received me in his bedroom which adjoins the library. He smiled at my surprise when I saw a shabby bureau, an old carpet, a collegian's bed, and cotton curtains at the window. He came out from an inner room where no one is allowed to enter, not even Jérôme, so I hear, who merely knocks at the door. Monsieur Savaron locked that door in my presence. The third time I went there he was breakfasting in his library in the most frugal manner. This time he had sat up all night examining our documents ; and as I had our lawyer with me, and poor Monsieur Girardet is very prolix, I was able to study Monsieur Savaron carefully. He is not an ordinary man, that is very certain. There is more than one secret behind that mask, which is both terrible and gentle, patient and impatient, full yet sunken. He stoops slightly, like those who carry some heavy burden."

"Why did such an eloquent man leave Paris? What is his object in coming to Besançon? Some one should have told him that strangers have no chance of success

here. People may make use of him, but the Besançons won't let him use them." Such were the comments of the company as the abbé told his tale.

"And pray why, since he did come, has he kept in such obscurity that it was only a caprice of the chief justice which brought him into notice?" asked the handsome Madame de Chavoncourt.

"After studying that fine head," continued the Abbé de Grancey, looking at his questioner with an air which seemed to say he was concealing something, "and above all, since I heard him this morning replying to one of the eagles of the Faris bar, I believe that this man, who must be about thirty-five, will some day produce a great sensation."

"Why concern ourselves with that? You have gained your suit and paid him," said Madame de Watteville, noticing that her daughter seemed to hang upon the lips of the vicar-general ever since he had begun to speak.

The conversation then took another turn and nothing more was said of Albert Savaron.

The portrait sketched by the ablest priest in the diocese had not only the attraction of a novel for Rosalie but it was in itself a romance for her. For the first time in her life she encountered the extraordinary, the marvellous, — which all youthful imaginations cherish and rush to meet with the eagerness that is very

keen at Rosalie's age. What an ideal being was Albert, gloomy, suffering, toiling, when compared in her mind with that fat and chubby Amédée, bursting with health, gallant in speech, venturing to talk of elegance in presence of the ancient grandeur of the Comtes de Rupt! Amédée was nothing to her but the cause of quarrels and reprimands, — besides, she knew him only too well; whereas this Albert Savaron offered her many an enigma to solve.

“Albert Savaron de Savarus,” she kept repeating to herself.

Could she only see him, — just perceive him! Such was the desire of the girl's soul, hitherto without desires. She went over in her heart, in her imagination, in her head, every word that the Abbé de Grancey had uttered, for each of them had struck home.

“A fine forehead!” she said to herself, looking at the foreheads of all the men around the table. “I don't see a fine one here. Monsieur de Soulas's is too prominent; Monsieur de Grancey's is handsome, but he is seventy years old and bald, and you don't know where the forehead begins —”

“What is the matter, Rosalie; why don't you eat your dinner?”

“I am not hungry, mamma,” she said. “Hands of a prelate!” she went on, to herself. “I can't remember those of the archbishop, though he confirmed me.”

At last, in the turnings and twistings of the labyrinth of her memory, she suddenly remembered that on waking one night she had seen from her bed, through the trees of the two adjoining gardens, a window brilliantly illuminated. "It must have been his light," she said to herself. "Then I can see him! I will see him!"

"Monsieur de Grancey, is the Chapter's lawsuit ended?" said Rosalie, suddenly, during a moment's silence.

Madame de Watteville exchanged a rapid glance with the vicar-general.

"What is that to you, my dear child?" she said to Rosalie, with a pretended gentleness which put her daughter on her guard for the rest of her days.

"They may appeal," replied the abbé, "but they will think twice about it."

"I could never have believed that Rosalie would think about a lawsuit during a whole dinner," remarked Madame de Watteville.

"Nor I either," said Rosalie, in a reflective way which made every one laugh, "but Monsieur de Grancey seemed so interested that I was interested too."

They rose from table, and returned to the salon. During all that evening Rosalie listened in hopes that Albert Savaron would be again spoken of. But beyond the congratulations which each new arrival offered

to the abbé on the success of the lawsuit, in which no one mentioned the lawyer, nothing further was said. Mademoiselle de Watteville waited for night with the utmost impatience. She determined to rise between two and three o'clock to look at the lighted study-windows of Albert Savaron. When the hour came she felt a sort of happiness in looking at the gleam which the lawyer's candles cast through the trees now almost shorn of their foliage. Helped by the excellent eyesight of a young girl, which was strengthened by curiosity, she saw Albert writing, and she thought she could distinguish the color of his furniture, which seemed to her red. The chimney above his roof was sending up a thick column of smoke.

"While all the world sleeps, he wakes — like God," she said to herself.

The education of young girls involves so many serious problems (for the future of a nation lies in the hands of mothers) that the University of France has long resigned the duty of thinking of it. Here, for instance, is one of those problems: Should young girls be enlightened? Should their minds be repressed? It is unnecessary to say that religious education means repression. If you enlighten them you make them demons before their time; if you repress them and prevent them from thinking, you meet with sudden explosions, which Molière has so well described in his *Agnes*, and

you put that repressed mind, so fresh, so perspicacious, rapid, and consecutive (like that of a savage), at the mercy of some event, like the fatal crisis produced in Mademoiselle de Watteville by the imprudent picture drawn at the dinner-table by the most prudent of the abbés of the prudent Chapter of Besançon.

The next morning, as Mademoiselle de Watteville was dressing, she naturally watched Albert Savaron, who was walking in the garden which adjoined that of the hôtel de Rupt.

“What would have become of me,” she thought, “had he lived elsewhere? Here I can at least see him. What is he thinking of?”

After seeing, at a distance, this remarkable man, the only man whose individuality seemed to vigorously produce itself above the mass of persons whom she had hitherto known, Rosalie jumped to the idea of penetrating his private life, finding out the reasons of so much mystery, hearing that eloquent voice, obtaining the glance of those wonderful eyes. She wanted all, but how could she obtain it?

During the day, she worked at her embroidery with the obtuse attention of a young girl who (like Molière's Agnes) appears to think of nothing, all the while reflecting so deeply that her schemes prove infallible. The result of Rosalie's profound meditation was a desire to confess. Accordingly, the next morning she

had a little conference at Saint-Pierre with the Abbé Giroud, and cajoled him so cleverly that her confession was appointed for Sunday morning at a quarter past eight during the eight o'clock mass. She told a dozen fibs in order to be in the church, only once, at the hour when the lawyer heard mass. Then a spasm of excessive fondness for her father seized her. She went to see him in his workshop; asked him many questions about his turning — all for the purpose of advising him to do larger things, columns for instance. Having put columns into his head — one of the noted difficulties of the art of turning — she advised him to take advantage of a mound of stones in the garden to make a grotto, and on that to erect a little temple, like a belvedere, round which his columns would be an object of admiration to all the town.

In the midst of the joy which such an idea infused into the mind of the poor, unoccupied man, Rosalie took occasion to say as she kissed him, “Be sure not to tell my mother that I suggested the plan. She would scold me.”

“Don’t be uneasy about that,” replied Monsieur de Watteville, who groaned like his daughter under the terrible oppression of the descendant of the de Rupts.

Thus Rosalie secured the building of a charming observatory from which to look into the lawyer’s study. There are men for whom young girls are capable of the

like masterpieces of diplomacy, who, like Albert Savaron, never suspect it.

Sunday morning, so impatiently awaited, came at last. Rosalie's toilet was performed with a nicety which made Mariette, the lady's maid of Mme. and Mlle. de Watteville, smile.

"I never saw Mademoiselle so particular before," she remarked.

"I have observed," said Rosalie, with a glance at Mariette which sent the color into the woman's cheeks, "that there are certain days when you are more particular than on others."

As she left the portico, crossed the courtyard, passed through the gate, and walked along the street, Rosalie's heart beat vehemently, as all hearts do when they foresee some great event. She had never known till then what it was to walk in the streets; for a moment she fancied her mother must see her plans in her face, and would forbid her to go to confession. She felt a new blood tingling in her feet, and lifted them as though they were stepping on fire. She had, naturally, made the appointment with the confessor at a quarter past eight, but she had told her mother it was at eight, so as to have a quarter of an hour to remain near Albert. She reached the church before the mass began, and after making a short prayer she went to see if the Abbé Giroud was in the confessional, for the sole pur-

pose of loitering about the church and placing herself where she could be sure of seeing Albert as he entered the church.

A man must be atrociously ugly not to seem handsome under the circumstances in which Mademoiselle de Watteville's curiosity placed him. Albert Savaron — really remarkable — made all the more impression on Rosalie because his action, carriage, attitude, even his clothing, bore signs of something which it is difficult to explain except by the word *mysterious*. He entered. The church, dark until then, seemed to Rosalie illuminated. She was fascinated by his slow movements, solemn as those of men who bear the world on their shoulders, whose look and gesture express either a devastating or a dominating thought. Looking at him, Rosalie understood the words of the vicar-general to their fullest extent. Yes, those brown eyes, flecked with gold, veiled an ardor of the soul which betrayed itself in sudden flashes. Rosalie, with an imprudence which was not lost on Mariette, put herself in the lawyer's way so that he was forced to exchange a look with her, — a look which convulsed her blood and made it throb and boil as if its heat were doubled. As soon as Albert was seated Mademoiselle de Watteville chose her place from which she could see him during the time before she entered the confessional, When Mariette said to her, "There is Monsieur Giroud!" it seemed

to Rosalie as if only a moment had elapsed. When she left the confessional, mass was over, and the lawyer had left the church.

“The vicar-general was right,” she thought, — “*he* suffers. Why should that eagle — for he has indeed an eagle’s eye — why should he light at Besançon? Oh, I must know all — but how can I?”

Under the compulsion of this new desire, Rosalie set her stitches with more than usual exactitude, and concealed her secret thoughts beneath an air of innocence which played simplicity and deceived even Madame de Watteville. Since that Sunday morning when Mademoiselle de Watteville received the lawyer’s glance, or, to describe it otherwise, her baptism of fire, — magnificent expression of Napoleon which may well serve in love, — she was eager in promoting the kiosk.

“Mamma,” she said, as soon as two columns were ready, “papa has taken a singular idea into his head; he is turning columns for a kiosk, which he wants to erect on that pile of stones in the middle of the garden. Do you approve of that? As for me, I think —”

“I approve of all your father does,” replied Madame de Watteville, curtly. “It is the duty of wives to submit to their husbands, even if they do not agree with their ideas. Why should I oppose an unimportant thing if it amuses your father?”

“Only because we shall overlook Monsieur de Soulas, and Monsieur de Soulas could see us when we are there, and people might say — ”

“Rosalie, are you assuming to guide your parents, and to know more than they do of life and its proprieties?”

“I will say no more, mamma. After all, papa says the grotto will be a nice cool place, where we can take our coffee.”

“Your father is full of excellent ideas,” replied Madame de Watteville, who at once went to see the columns.

She gave her approbation to the plan, and advised her husband to erect his kiosk at the farther end of the garden, where it could not be overlooked by Monsieur de Soulas, while, on the other hand, it had a fine view into the windows of Monsieur Savaron. A contractor was employed to make the grotto, on the summit of which was to stand the kiosk, reached by a little path, three feet wide, and bordered among the rocks with periwinkle, iris, viburnum, ivy, honeysuckle, and the wild grape. The baroness suggested lining the interior with rustic woodwork (then in fashion for flower-stands), and putting a mirror at the lower end, a divan with cushions, and a rustic table with the bark on it. Monsieur de Soulas advised an asphalt floor. Rosalie proposed a hanging lamp, also in rustic woods.

"The Watteville's are doing something charming in their garden," said Besançon.

"They are rich, — they can afford two or three thousand francs for a fancy."

"Two or three thousand francs!" cried Madame de Chavoncourt.

"Yes, at least that much," said young Monsieur de Soulas; "they have sent to Paris for a man to do the rustic work, and it will certainly be charming. Monsieur de Watteville means to make the lamp himself, — he is already carving the frame."

"They say that Berquet is digging a cave."

"No," said young Monsieur de Soulas, "he is only securing the kiosk to the grotto with mortar so as to prevent all dampness."

"You seem to know everything that goes on in that house," said Madame de Chavoncourt, with some sourness, as she glanced at one of her tall girls, who had been marriageable for the last year.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, feeling some little emotion of pride in thinking of the success of her kiosk, now regarded herself as possessing a decided superiority over all those about her. No one imagined that a girl, hitherto thought silly and with no mind at all, had produced this result from a wish to see into the study of Monsieur Albert Savaron.

The brilliant speech of the lawyer on behalf of the

Chapter of the cathedral was forgotten all the sooner because it roused the jealousy of the other lawyers. Besides which, faithful to his desire for seclusion; Savaron went nowhere and was never seen. Without friends to proclaim him, and visiting no one, he increased the chances of oblivion which in a town like Besançon abound for strangers. He did, however, argue three times before the court of commerce in knotty cases which were likely to be carried to the upper court. In one, his clients were four of the wealthiest merchants of the place, who recognized his sound sense and what the provinces call "judicial mind," and trusted him with all their litigations.

The day on which the Wattevelles inaugurated their kiosk Savaron raised a monument to himself in his own way. He founded a fortnightly review which he called the "*Revue de l'Est*," thanks to the support of the above-named merchants and their friends, and on the strength of forty shares taken at five hundred francs apiece, the money being placed in the hands of the first ten subscribers whom he had induced to take this step with a view of benefiting the future of Besançon, — a town which should be made the chief stopping-place between Mulhausen and the Rhone. To rival Strasburg, he said, Besançon ought to be as much a centre of intelligence as of commerce. A periodical was the only means of openly discussing

the important questions relating to the interests of the East. What glory it would be to snatch from Strasburg and Dijon their literary influence, to enlighten the East of France, and to emulate Parisian centralization. These considerations suggested by Albert were put forth by his ten shareholders as their own.

Savaron did not commit the blunder of putting his own name to the enterprise. He left the financial management to his first client, Monsieur Boucher, who was connected through his wife with one of the leading publishers of ecclesiastical literature ; but he held the editing in his own hands, together with a share in the business as its originator. The management called for the assistance of all the adjacent towns, Dôle, Dijon, Salins, Neufchâtel, in the Jura, Bourg, Nantua, and Lons-le-Saulnier. Not only this, but they asked for the efforts and advice of all studious men in the three provinces of Bugey, Bresse, and La Comté. Five hundred subscribers were obtained in consequence of the low price of the review, — only eight francs quarterly. To avoid wounding provincial susceptibilities by the refusal of articles, Savaron had the wit to make the eldest son of the business manager, Monsieur Boucher, desire the place of literary director. This young man, who was only twenty-two and eager for fame, knew nothing as yet of the pitfalls or the annoyances of literary management. Nevertheless, Savaron secretly held the reins, and

Alfred Boucher was really his subordinate. Alfred was the only person in Besançon with whom the hero of the bar became familiar. Young Boucher called daily to confer with him as he walked round the garden in the morning. It is needless to say that the initial number of the review contained a "Meditation" by Alfred, which elicited Savaron's approval. In his conversations with Alfred, Albert let drop fine ideas and subjects for articles, by which young Boucher profited; he felt he had a mine to work in the great man, for to him Albert was a man of genius and a profound statesman. The merchants, delighted with the success of their review, were not obliged to deposit more than three tenths of their shares. Two hundred more subscribers and the enterprise would pay five per cent to its stockholders; for no salary was paid to the editor — his services, in fact, could not be compensated in money.

By the third number the Review had obtained exchanges with nearly all the French newspapers, which Albert could then read in his own home. This third number contained a novel signed "A. S.," and attributed to the lawyer himself. Notwithstanding the very slight attention which the highest society in Besançon accorded to this review, which was accused of liberalism, some one happened to mention at Madame de Chavoncourt's, one evening in midwinter, that it

contained the first novel ever brought out in La Comté.

“Papa,” said Rosalie the next day, “there is a review published in Besançon; you ought to subscribe to it. Keep it in your own room, for mamma would not let me read it; but you will lend it to me.”

Anxious to please his dear Rosalie, who for the last five months had given him many proofs of filial tenderness, Monsieur de Watteville went himself to subscribe for the “*Revue de l’Est*,” and lent the first four numbers to his daughter. During the night Rosalie devoured the novel, the first she had ever read in her life — but she felt that she had never lived until within the last few months. We must therefore not judge of the effect the tale produced on her by any ordinary principles. Without prejudging either way the merits of this production from the pen of a Parisian who brought into the provinces the manner, and, if you choose, the brilliancy of the new school of writers, it could not fail to seem a masterpiece to a young girl applying her virgin mind and a pure heart to the study of a first work of this kind. Besides, from something she had heard, an intuition, an idea, had come to her, which greatly enhanced in her eyes the value of this novel. She expected to find the sentiments and perhaps something of the life of Albert himself in it. This expectation was so fully confirmed from the very first pages that

after reading the whole fragment she felt certain she was not mistaken.

Here follows the tale in which, according to the critics of the salon Chavoncourt, Albert had imitated certain modern writers, who, for want of invention, relate their own joys and sorrows and the mysterious events of their personal lives.

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II.

AMBITIOUS THROUGH LOVE.

IN 1823 two young men who had planned a journey through Switzerland started from Lucerne one fine morning in the month of July in a boat with three rowers. They were going to Fluelen, intending to stop on the way at all the points of interest on the Lake of the Four-Cantons. The various landscapes which from Lucerne to Fluelen surround the water offer every combination of beauty which the most exacting imagination can demand of mountains, rivers, rocks or rivulets, verdure, trees, and torrents. Here, stern solitude and graceful promontories, smiling and coquettish country-places; there, forests hanging like a plume from the vertical granite, lonely and refreshing inlets opening into valleys, the treasures of which seem enhanced by the dreamy distance.

As they passed before the charming village of Gersau, one of the two friends looked long at a wooden house lately built, inclosed by a palisade, standing on a promontory and almost bathed by the lake. As the boat passed it, a woman's head was lifted in the inte-

rior of a room on the upper story of the house, as if to enjoy the sight of a boat upon the lake. One of the young men received the glance carelessly cast by the unknown woman.

“Let us stop here,” he said to his friend; “we intended to make Lucerne the headquarters for our excursions about Switzerland. You will not mind, Léopold, if I change my mind and remain here in charge of the portmanteaus? You can make the trips alone; as for me, I shall stay here. Boatmen, put us ashore at the village; we shall breakfast there. I will go back to Lucerne and fetch our bags and baggage,” he continued, “and you shall know before you go further the house I lodge in, where you will find me on your return.”

“Here or at Lucerne,” said Léopold, “there is so little difference I won’t hinder you from following a caprice.”

The two young men were friends in the true acceptation of the word. They were of the same age, they had gone to the same college; after finishing their law-studies, they were now employing their vacation in the classic journey through Switzerland. By his father’s efforts and will, Léopold was already promised the practice of a notary in Paris. His upright nature, his gentleness, the calmness of his senses, and his intelligence guaranteed his acquiescence in his father’s wish.

He saw himself a notary ; his life lay before him like one of those straight roads which cross the plains of France ; he viewed it to its full extent with a resignation that was full of philosophy.

The character of his companion, whom we shall call Rodolphe, presented a contrast to his own, which no doubt strengthened the tie that united them. Rodolphe was the natural son of a great seigneur, who was overtaken by sudden death before he could make proper provision for a woman whom he tenderly loved and for his son. Thus betrayed by fate, Rodolphe's mother had recourse to heroic measures. She sold all she had received from the father of her child for about one hundred thousand francs or rather more, and bought with this sum an annuity for her life at a heavy rate ; thus obtaining an income of some fifteen thousand francs. She determined to devote all to the education of her son, in order to give him the personal advantages that would enable him to make his own way in life, and she also resolved to lay by yearly enough to give him a small capital when he reached his majority. It was a bold measure ; it was counting on her own life ; but without this courage it would have been impossible for the good mother to live and properly educate her son, her only hope, her future, the sole source to her of happiness. Born of a charming Parisian woman and a man distinguished among the Brabantian nobility, the

fruit of a mutual passion, Rodolphe was afflicted with extreme sensibility. From his infancy he had shown excessive ardor in everything. In him, desires had supreme force and were the motive of his whole being, the stimulus of his imagination, the reason of his actions. Notwithstanding the efforts of an intelligent mother, who was frightened when she perceived these tendencies, Rodolphe desired as a poet imagines, as the man of science calculates, as a painter sketches, as a musician modulates his melodies. Tender, like his mother, he rushed violently in thought towards the object wished for; he annihilated time; while dreaming of the accomplishment of his wishes he suppressed all thought of the means of execution. "When my son has children," said his mother, "he will expect them to be grown-up at once." This fine ardor, carefully directed, enabled Rodolphe to study with brilliant results, and to become what the English call "a perfect gentleman." His mother was proud of him, all the while fearing some catastrophe if a passion should ever fasten upon that heart so tender and so sensitive, so violent and so kind. Therefore the prudent woman had encouraged the friendship that bound Léopold to Rodolphe and Rodolphe to Léopold; seeing as she did in the calm and faithful notary a guardian and a confidential friend who might to some extent replace her should she unhappily be called away. She was still

beautiful at forty-five years of age, and Léopold felt for her an ardent attachment, which drew the young men still closer together.

Léopold, who knew Rodolphe well, was not surprised to find him, as the result of a single glance cast upon a certain house, resolved on stopping short at Gersau and relinquishing their projected excursion to the Saint-Gotthard. While breakfast was being prepared for them at the little inn of La Cygne, the two friends walked about the village, and reached the neighborhood of the new house, where, by loitering about and talking with the inhabitants, Rodolphe discovered a neighboring house, the owners of which were willing to take him to board, according to a prevailing custom in Switzerland. They offered him a room looking on the water and the mountains, from which could be seen one of those magnificent sweeps of the lake of the Four-Cantons which are the admiration of all travellers. This house was divided by a small square and a little wharf from the new house where Rodolphe had seen the face of his beautiful unknown.

For one hundred francs a month Rodolphe was to have no thought about the necessities of life. But, in consideration of the outlays required, the Stopfers, who owned the house, required him to pay the third month in advance. Rub a Swiss, and you will find a usurer. Breakfast over, Rodolphe installed himself at once;

bringing to his room all the effects he was taking for his excursion to the Saint-Gotthard, after which he saw Léopold off on the trip which, in obedience to the arranged plan, the latter now took for himself and his friend. When Rodolphe, sitting on a rock that had rolled to the shore, could no longer see the boat which carried Léopold, he began to examine furtively the new house, in hopes of catching sight of the lady. Alas! he was compelled to return home without detecting any signs of life. At dinner-time he asked Monsieur and Madame Stopfer about the environs, and ended by learning all he wanted to know, thanks to the loquacity of his hosts, who were ready, without being asked, to empty their bag of gossip.

The unknown lady was called Miss Fanny Lovelace. This name belongs to an old English family, though Richardson used it for a creation which has dwarfed all its other distinctions. Miss Lovelace was living on the lake for her father's health; the physicians had ordered him to the canton of Lucerne. They had arrived without any servant excepting a little girl of fourteen, a mute, who was much attached to Miss Fanny, on whom she waited intelligently. The Lovelaces had hired their apartment the winter before from Monsieur and Madame Bergmann, — the husband formerly head-gardener to his Excellency Comte Borromeo at Isola Bella and Isola Madre on the Lago Maggiore. These

people, who were well-to-do, had let the upper part of their house to the Lovelaces for two hundred francs a year for two years. Old Mr. Lovelace, an octogenarian, and very feeble, — too poor to incur certain expenses, — seldom went out. His daughter supported him by translating English works and writing books herself, so it was said. The Lovelaces never allowed themselves to hire boats on the lake, nor horses, nor guides to show them the environs. A poverty which compels such privations excites the compassion of the Swiss all the more because it touches their source of gain. The Bergmann's cook fed the three English people for one hundred francs a month, everything included. But it was believed throughout Gersau that the Bergmanns, in spite of their pretensions to belong to the bourgeoisie, were really hidden under the name of their cook and took the profits for themselves. The former gardener and his wife had made beautiful gardens around their place, and a fine greenhouse. The flowers, the fruits, and the rare botanical treasures, had determined Miss Lovelace to choose that house when she first came to Gersau. She was said to be nineteen years old, — the last child of the old man, who idolized her. About two months ago she sent to Lucerne for a piano; she was infatuated about music.

“She loves flowers and music,” thought Rodolphe, “and not married — what happiness!”

The next day Rodolphe asked permission to look at the greenhouse and walk round the gardens, which were beginning to have a public celebrity. The permission was not given immediately; the old gardener, strangely enough, requested to see Rodolphe's passport, which was sent over at once. The passport was brought back the next day by the cook, who informed him that her master and mistress would be pleased to show him their establishment. Rodolphe did not go to the house without a certain quivering of the flesh known only to persons of keen susceptibilities, who develop in a moment as many emotions as some other men put into their whole lives. Dressed with care to impress the gardeners, — for he saw in them the guardians of his treasure, — he walked about the gardens, looking now and then at the house, though cautiously, for the two owners evidently regarded him with distrust. His attention was soon excited by the little dumb girl, whom his natural sagacity, though still immature, made him recognize at once as Moorish, or, at any rate, Sicilian. The girl had the golden brown skin of an Havana cigar, eyes of fire, Armenian eyelids with lashes of a length that was wholly un-Britannic; hair that was more than black, and beneath that olive skin nerves of extraordinary strength and feverish excitability. She cast inquisitorial glances, of startling boldness, at Rodolphe, and watched his every movement.

“To whom does that little Moor belong?” he asked of the worthy Madame Bergmann.

“To the English people,” replied Monsieur Bergmann.

“She was never born in England.”

“Perhaps they brought her from the Indies,” said Madame Bergmann.

“They tell me Miss Lovelace is fond of music; I should be enchanted if, during my stay at the lake which is ordered by my physician, she would allow me to play or sing with her.”

“They neither receive nor wish to know any one,” said the old gardener.

Rodolphe bit his lips, and left the gardens, without having been invited to enter the house, nor shown over that part of the garden which lay between the front of the house and the lake. On this side the house had a wooden gallery above the first floor, covered by a roof which projected far, like the roof of a *châlet*, and went round the four sides of the house in the Swiss fashion. Rodolphe had praised this convenient construction, and remarked on the beauty of the view from the gallery; but all in vain. When he had bowed to the Bergmanns and departed he felt a fool in his own eyes, like any other man of mind and imagination balked by the ill-success of a plan on which he had counted.

That evening he went out in a boat on the lake.

skirted the promontory, and rowed as far as Brünnen and Schwitz, returning at dusk. From afar he could see *her* window, open and brilliantly lighted, and he could hear the sound of a piano and the tones of a delightful voice. He stopped the boatman, that he might yield himself wholly up to the charm of listening to an Italian air divinely sung. When the song ceased, Rodolphe landed on the promontory and sent away the boat and the two boatmen. At the risk of wetting his feet, he sat down on the granite wall worn by the water, behind which was a thick hedge of the thorny *acacia*, flanked on its other side by a long avenue of young lindens, which ran the whole length of the Bergmanns' garden. After an hour's waiting he heard persons walking and talking just above him, but the words which reached his ear were Italian, spoken by two young female voices. He profited by the moment when the pair reached the extremity of the path to force his way to the other end of it without noise. After much effort he succeeded, and took up a position where, without being perceived or heard, he could see the two women as they came towards him.

What was Rodolphe's astonishment to find the dumb girl one of the two women. She was speaking Italian with Miss Lovelace! It was eleven o'clock at night. The stillness was so perfect upon the lake and around the house that the women must have felt themselves in

safety ; in all Gersau there were no eyes open but theirs. Rodolphe thought the pretended dumbness of the little girl might be some necessary precaution. By the way they spoke Italian he was convinced it was the mother-tongue of both of them, and he concluded that the fiction of their being English covered some purpose.

“They are Italian refugees,” he thought, “exiles who fear the police of Austria or Sardinia. The young girl waits for night to take her exercise and to talk in safety.”

He lay down beside the hedge and crawled like a snake till he could force a passage between the stems of the acacias. At the risk of leaving his coat on the thorns and inflicting serious wounds on his back he crept through the hedge just as the pretended English girl and her pretended dumb attendant were at the other end of the alley. Then when they turned and came within twenty feet of him without seeing him (for he was in the shadow of the hedge, against which the moon was shining brightly) he suddenly rose to his feet.

“Fear nothing,” said Rodolphe in French to the one called Miss Lovelace. “I am not a spy. You are refugees ; I have guessed it. I am a Frenchman, held at Gersau by one look out of your eyes.”

He suddenly felt a sharp pain from some instrument which stabbed his side, and he fell to the ground.

“Nel lago!” cried the terrible dumb girl.

“Ah, Gina!” exclaimed her mistress.

“She missed me,” said Rodolphe, pulling the stiletto from the wound, where it had merely struck the ribs; “a little higher and it would have reached my heart. I did wrong, Francesca,” he said using the name he had heard the little girl pronounce. “I am not angry with her; do not blame her; the happiness of speaking to you is cheaply earned with a stab like this — but show me the way out, I must get back to the Stopfers’ house. Don’t be afraid, I will not say a word about it.”

Francesca, recovering from her astonishment, helped Rodolphe to rise, and said a few words to Gina which filled her eyes with tears. The two women forced Rodolphe to sit down on a bench and take off his coat, waistcoat, and cravat. Gina opened his shirt and sucked the wound. Francesca, who had left them, returned with a large piece of plaster with which she strapped the wound.

“You will be able to get home now,” she said.

They each took an arm and led Rodolphe to a little gate in the garden, the key of which Francesca produced from the pocket of her apron.

“Does Gina speak French?” said Rodolphe to Francesca.

“No. But don’t excite yourself,” said Francesca, with an impatient little air.

“Let me see you,” replied Rodolphe; “because it may be long before I can come again —”

He leaned against one of the gate-posts and looked at the beautiful Italian, who allowed him to do so for an instant amid the stillest silence and the finest night that ever beautified that lake, the monarch of all Swiss lakes. Francesca was indeed a classical Italian, and all that the imagination expects, waking or dreaming, that an Italian woman should be. The first thing that struck Rodolphe was the elegance and grace of her figure, the vigor of which was quite apparent in spite of her slender appearance, so supple was she. An amber paleness which overspread her face told of the sudden excitement she had felt, but it did not conflict with the glow of the liquid eyes, which were black and tender. Two hands — the most beautiful hands that ever a Greek sculptor attached to the polished arms of a statue — held Rodolphe’s arm, and their white contrasted with the dark color of his coat. He only caught a glimpse of the rather long oval of her face, with its grieved mouth showing the dazzling teeth between full lips that were fresh and rosy. The beauty of the lines of the face guaranteed to Francesca the continuance of her splendor; but what struck Rodolphe more than anything was the adorable ease and freedom, the Italian frankness of this woman, who yielded herself wholly to the impulse of her compassion.

Francesca said a word to Gina, who gave an arm to Rodolphe and led him to the Stopfers' house; once there, she rang the bell and fled away like a swallow.

"These patriots strike home," thought Rodolphe, beginning to feel his sufferings when he was alone and in his bed. "'Nel lago!' Gina would have flung me into the lake with a stone round my neck!"

Early next morning he sent to Lucerne for the best surgeon, and when he came swore him to secrecy on the ground that his honor required it. Léopold got back from his excursion on the day his friend left his bed. Rodolphe invented a tale and sent him to Lucerne to fetch their baggage and letters. Léopold returned with fatal news; Rodolphe's mother was dead. While the two friends were travelling from Bâle to Lucerne the mournful tidings were written by Léopold's father, and reached Lucerne on the day they started for Fluelen. In spite of all Léopold's precautions Rodolphe was seized with a nervous fever. As soon as the future notary saw his friend out of danger, he started for France, furnished with a power of attorney. Rodolphe could thus remain at Gersau, the only spot where his grief might be soothed. The situation of the young Frenchman, his illness, his despair, and the circumstances which made the loss so much worse for him than for many others, became known and won for him the compassion and interest of all Gersau. Every

morning the so-called dumb girl came to see the Frenchman and carry news of him to her mistress.

When Rodolphe was able to go out he went to the Bergmanns' house to thank Miss Fanny Lovelace and her father for the interest they had shown in his illness and sorrow. For the first time since the old Italian had come to live at the Bergmanns' he allowed a stranger to enter his abode, where Rodolphe was now received with a cordiality due to his misfortunes and the fact that he was a Frenchman, which excluded all distrust of his motives. Francesca was so beautiful that evening by candlelight that a ray of brightness entered his despondent heart. Her smiles were the roses of hope cast on his mourning. She sang, not lively airs, but grave, sublime melodies in harmony with Rodolphe's state of mind; and this kind care he noticed. Towards eight o'clock the old man left the two young people together, without any appearance of distrust, and went to his own room. When Francesca was tired of singing she took Rodolphe to the outer gallery, before which lay the glorious panorama of the lake, and made him a sign to sit beside her on a rustic wooden seat.

"Is there any indiscretion in asking your age, *cara* Francesca?" said the young man.

"Nineteen," she said, "my last birthday."

"If anything in the world could lessen my grief," he said, "it would be to obtain you from your father,

in whatever position in life you may be. Beautiful as you are, you seem to me of more worth than the daughters of princes; therefore I tremble in making this avowal of the feelings you have inspired in me. But they are deep, — they are eternal."

"Hush!" said Francesca, laying a finger of her right hand on her lips; "say no more; I am not free; I am married — for the last three years."

A deep silence ensued for the next few minutes. When the Italian, frightened by Rodolphe's attitude, looked closely at him, she saw that he had fainted.

"Povero!" she said, "and I thought him cold!"

She went to fetch some salts, which revived him.

"Married!" he said, looking at Francesca, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Child!" she said, smiling, "there is hope. My husband is —"

"Eighty!" cried Rodolphe.

"No," she answered, laughing, — "sixty-five. He pretends to be old to mislead the police."

"Dear Francesca," said Rodolphe, "a few more such emotions and they would kill me. Twenty years' knowledge of me would not show you the strength and power of my heart, nor the nature of my aspirations towards happiness. That plant" — pointing to a Virginia jessamine which was climbing the balustrade — "does not stretch upward with more eagerness to blos-

som in the sunshine than I to you during this last month. I love you with a love unlike all other love. It will be forever the secret mainspring of my being — I may even die of it !”

“ Oh, Frenchman, Frenchman !” she exclaimed, pointing her exclamation with a little pout of incredulity.”

“ I will wait for you, and win you from the hand of Time,” he said, gravely. “ But know this ; if you are sincere in the expression that has just escaped you, I will wait for you faithfully, and never shall another sentiment enter my heart.”

She looked at him doubtingly.

“ None — not the merest fancy,” he went on. “ I have my way to make in the world ; a noble fortune must be yours, — nature has created you a princess — ”

Francesca could not restrain the flicker of a smile, which gave a ravishing expression to her face, — a look of delicate and sensitive meaning, such as the grand Leonardo has given to his Gioconda. That smile made Rodolphe pause.

“ Yes,” he resumed, “ you must have suffered deeply from the privations of exile. Ah ! if you are willing to make me the happiest of men and sanctify my love, treat me as a friend — let me *be* your friend. My poor mother has left me sixty thousand francs of her savings — take half.”

Francesca looked at him fixedly. That piercing look went to the bottom of his soul.

"We want for nothing; my work is enough for all our needs," she answered in a grave voice.

"I cannot endure that you should work!" he cried. "Some day you will return to your own country, and recover what you have left there —"

Again the young Italian looked at him.

"And you can pay me all you deign to borrow," he added, with a look full of delicacy.

"Let us change the subject," she said, with an incomparable dignity of look and manner and gesture. "Make yourself a brilliant career; be one of the remarkable men of your country; I wish it. Fame is a drawbridge by which to cross a gulf. Be ambitious; you must be. I believe you have high and powerful faculties. But — employ them more for the benefit of humanity than to win me: you will seem the greater in my eyes."

In this conversation, which lasted two hours, Rodolphe discovered in Francesca that enthusiasm for liberal ideas and the worship of liberty which made the triple revolution of Naples, Piedmont, and Spain. When he left her, Gina conducted him to the gate. It was eleven o'clock; no one was stirring in the village, and no inquisitive eyes were to be feared. Rodolphe drew Gina into a corner and said, in a low voice and

bad Italian: "Who are your masters, my child? Tell me, and I will give you this new bit of gold."

"Monsieur," said the child, taking the money, "my master is the famous bookseller Lamporani of Milan, one of the heads of the revolution, — a conspirator whom Austria wants to put in the Spielberg."

"Wife of a bookseller!" thought Rodolphe. "So much the better; then we are equals. "What family does your mistress come from?" he asked aloud; "she has the manner of a queen."

"All Italian women are like that," replied Gina, proudly; "her father's name is Colonna."

Emboldened by Francesca's humble station in life, Rodolphe ordered cushions and an awning for his boat. When these were ready he asked Francesca to go out with him on the lake. She accepted at once, perhaps to keep up her part as a young English lady in the eyes of the villagers; but she took Gina with her. Every action of Francesca Colonna bore the signs of a superior education and of the highest social rank. Even the manner in which she took her seat at the stern of the boat made Rodolphe feel in some sort separated from her; and in presence of that proud consciousness of nobility his premeditated familiarity vanished. By a mere look Francesca made herself a princess, with all the privileges she might have enjoyed in the middle-ages. She seemed to have guessed the secret thoughts of the

vassal who had had the boldness to make himself her protector. Already, in the arrangement of the salon where Francesca had received him, in her dress, in the little articles she used, Rodolphe had noticed the signs of a fastidious nature and great wealth. All these observations returned to his mind, and he became thoughtful, after being, as it were, repulsed by Francesca's dignity. Gina, who was scarcely more than a child, seemed to have a mocking expression as she glanced sideways or beneath her eyelids at Rodolphe. This visible discrepancy between the position of the Italian and her manners was a new enigma to Rodolphe, who began to suspect Gina of another trick like that of her false dumbness.

“Which way will you go, *Signora Lamporani*?” he asked.

“Towards Lucerne,” replied Francesca in French.

“At any rate,” thought Rodolphe, “she is not surprised to hear me call her by name; she must know that I questioned that sly Gina. “Have you anything against me?” he asked, sitting down at last beside her, and offering to take her hand, which Francesca drew back. “You are cold and ceremonious; what we call in conversation *cutting*.”

“Very true,” she replied, smiling. “I am to blame. It is not right. It is bourgeois. I had much better explain myself than suffer cold or hostile feelings to

grow up against a friend — for you have proved your friendship for me. Perhaps I have gone too far with you. You must have taken me for an ordinary woman.” Rodolphe made sign after sign of denial. “Yes,” said the bookseller’s wife, paying no attention to the pantomime which she saw plainly, “I perceived it, and I change my course, naturally. I shall end all this with a few words that are profoundly true. I wish you to understand me, Rodolphe; I have in me the strength to extinguish a feeling which would not be in harmony with the ideas or the intuitions that I have of true love. I could love as we love in Italy, but I know my duty; no infatuation could make me forget it. I was married without my consent to that poor old man, and I am at liberty to use the freedom he so generously gives me; but three years of married life have made me accept the conjugal yoke. Nothing, not the most ardent passion, could ever make me express, even involuntarily, a desire for freedom. Emilio knows my character. He knows that, excepting my heart, which is mine to dispose of as I please, I will never let any one so much as take my hand. That is why I refused it to you just now. I wish to be loved, to be waited for with fidelity, nobleness of heart, ardor, with no return but an infinite tenderness, the expression of which will never go farther than the words of my heart, where it has the right to live. If all this can be thoroughly

understood — oh then!" she cried with a girlish gesture, "I will be smiling and coquettish and gay as a child which knows no danger."

This plain declaration, made so frankly, was said with a tone, an accent, a look, which gave it the impress of the deepest truth.

"A Princess Colonna could not make known her wishes better," said Rodolphe, smiling.

"Is that," she said haughtily, "a slur upon the humbleness of my birth? Must you have a coat-of-arms for your love? The noblest names are over the shops in Milan, — Sforza, Canova, Visconti, Trivulzio, Ursini; there's an apothecary named Archinto. But you may indeed believe, in spite of my position as a shopkeeper's wife, that I have the sentiments of a duchess."

"A slur? no, madame, I meant to praise you."

"By a comparison?" she said, quickly.

"Ah! believe," he cried, "and torture me no more. If my words should ill-express my feelings, believe that my love is absolute, and carries with it obedience and infinite respect."

She bowed her head as if satisfied and said: "Then you accept the treaty?"

"Yes," he said. "I can understand how in the rich and powerful organization of a woman the faculty of loving can never be lost, but, through delicacy of

conscience, you restrain it. Ah! Francesca, a mutual tenderness, at my age and with a woman so sublimely, royally beautiful — why, that is the crown of all desires! To love you as you wish to be loved — is not that to preserve a young man from every folly? does not that mean using all his powers in a noble passion of which they may both be proud some day — a love which can give none but glorious memories? Ah! if you did but know with what colors, what poesy you invest that high Pilatus, that Rigi, this magnificent lake — ”

“ I wish to know it,” she said, with the Italian naïveté which is always tinged with a little guile.

“ Well, know it then! this hour will shine upon my life forever as a diamond on the brow of a queen.”

For all answer Francesca laid her hand on his.

“ Oh dearest, forever dear,” he cried, “ tell me, have you ever loved? ”

“ Never.”

“ And you will let me love you nobly, awaiting the future from heaven? ” he asked.

She bowed her head gently. Two heavy tears fell from Rodolphe’s eyes.

“ What pains you? ” she said quickly, laying aside her imperial manner.

“ Would that my mother were here to see that I am happy; she has left this earth without knowing that which would have comforted her last hours.”

“Knowing what?” she asked.

“That her tenderness was replaced by another equal to it.”

“Povero mio!” said the Italian, much moved. Then, after a pause, she added: “It is, believe me, a very tender thing and a very constraining influence to fidelity, for a woman to know herself the all on earth to one she loves, to know he is alone, without family, without any thought in his heart except his love, which is hers only.”

When two hearts thus understand each other a delightful stillness fills them, a divine tranquillity. Certainty is the basis which all sentiments desire; a basis never lacking to religious feeling; man is certain of his reward from God. Human love knows that its only security lies in its likeness to the divine love. A man must have deeply experienced these delights to understand the joy of this moment — always the only one of its kind in life; it returns, alas! no more than the emotions of our youth return. To believe in a woman; to make her his earthly religion, the essence of his being, the secret light upon his every thought! — is not that to be born again? A young man mingles this love with the feeling he has had for his mother.

Rodolphe and Francesca were silent for a long time, answering each other mutely with friendly looks that were full of thoughts. They understood each in the

midst of that most lovely scene of Nature, the glories of which, explained by those of their own hearts, helped them to engrave upon their memory the fleeting impression of that sole, irreplaceable moment of their lives. In Francesca's conduct there was not the faintest trace of coquetry. All was noble, grand, without one lesser thought. The grandeur keenly affected Rodolphe, who recognized therein the difference that distinguishes the Italian woman from the Frenchwoman. All things about him were grand and also tender, — the water, the earth, the sky, the woman, even their love in the midst of that vast picture rich in details, where the clear-cut lines of the snowy peaks resting upon the sky reminded Rodolphe of the conditions on which he possessed his happiness, — a rich land circled with snow.

This gentle intoxication of their souls was soon disturbed. A boat approached them, coming from Lucerne. Gina, who had been watching it for some time with deep attention, made a sudden gesture of joy, but was faithful to her rôle of dumbness. The boat came nearer; Francesca distinguished a face in it. "Tito!" she cried, recognizing a young man. She rose, and stood up in the boat, at the risk of losing her balance.

"Tito! Tito!" she cried, waving her handkerchief.

Tito gave an order to his men, and the two boats

ranged side by side. Francesca and the stranger then spoke to each other with such eagerness, and in a dialect so incomprehensible to a man who scarcely knew the Italian of books and had never been in Italy, that Rodolphe could neither understand nor guess the subject of conversation. Tito's beauty, Francesca's familiarity, Gina's look of joy, all distressed him. Besides, was there ever a lover who is not annoyed when he finds himself left for another person, no matter who that other may be? Tito threw a little leather bag to Gina, apparently full of gold, and he gave a package of letters to Francesca, who, with a sign of farewell to the young man, began at once to read them.

"Row back to Gersau," she said to the boatmen, adding, as if to herself, "I will not let my poor Emilio suffer five minutes longer than he need."

"What has happened?" asked Rodolphe, when she had read her last letter.

"La libertà!" she cried, enthusiastically.

"And money!" echoed Gina, who suddenly found her voice.

"Yes," said Francesca; "no more poverty! It is eleven months now that I have had to work. and I was beginning to be tired of it. Decidedly, I am not a literary woman."

"Who is that Tito?" asked Rodolphe.

"The secretary of the financial department of the

poor shop of the Colonnas," replied Francesca; "in other words, the son of our agent. Poor fellow! he could not come either by the Saint-Gothard, or the Mont Cenis, or the Simplon; he came by sea to Marseilles, and has crossed France. So now, in three weeks we shall be in Geneva, living at our ease! Why, Rodolphe," she said, noticing the sadness on the young man's face, "is n't the Lake of Geneva as fine as the Lake of the Four-Cantons?"

"May I not feel a regret for that delightful cottage of the Bergmanns?" said Rodolphe, pointing to the promontory.

"Come and dine with us, to multiply your recollections, *povero mio*," she said. "We'll keep holiday to-day; there's no longer any danger! My mother writes me that in another year, probably, we shall be amnestied. Oh, *la cara patria*!"

The words made Gina weep. "I should have died of another winter here," she said.

"Poor little Sicilian goat!" cried Francesca, passing her hand over Gina's head with a gesture of affection which made Rodolphe wish he might be thus caressed, even without love.

The boat reached the shore. Rodolphe jumped on the sand and held out his hand to Francesca, walked with her to the Bergmanns' gate, and then went home to dress for dinner.

On his return he found the bookseller and his wife sitting on the outer gallery, and could hardly repress an exclamation of surprise at the enormous change which the good news had wrought in the old man. He now beheld a man about sixty, perfectly preserved, a spare Italian, erect, with hair still black though scanty, and showing a white brow, keen eyes, a complete set of teeth, the face of Cæsar, in short, and on his diplomatic lips a smile that was rather sardonic, apparently the false smile under which a man of the world hides his real feelings.

"You see my husband in his natural guise," said Francesca, gravely.

"He is altogether a new acquaintance," replied Rodolphe, disconcerted.

"Altogether," said the bookseller. "I have played comedies in my time, and know how to disguise myself. Ah, I acted in Paris in the days of the empire with Bourrienne, Madame Murat, Madame d'Abrantès, *e tutti quanti*. Everything we take the trouble to learn in our youth, even foolish things, come to some use. If my wife had not had a man's education, in contradiction to Italian ideas, I should have had to be a woodchopper in order to live at all. Povera Francesca! who could have believed that she would one day support me?"

As Rodolphe listened to the worthy bookseller, so

easy, affable, and still vigorous, he felt certain there was some mystification, and he maintained the observing silence of a duped man.

“What is the matter, signor?” asked Francesca, naïvely. “Surely our happiness does not grieve you?”

“Your husband is a young man,” he said in a low voice.

Her laugh was so frank, so communicative that Rodolphe was more than ever taken aback.

“He has only sixty-five years to offer you,” she said; “but I assure you that is — quite reassuring.”

“I do not like to have you jest about a love as sacred as mine, on which you have imposed your own conditions.”

“Hush!” she said, glancing at her husband to see if he heard them. “Never trouble the peace of that dear man, open-hearted as a child, with whom I do as I will. He is,” she added, “under my protection: If you knew with what nobleness of heart he has risked his life and fortune because I am liberal! for he does not share my political opinions. Isn’t that loving, Monsieur le Français? But they are all so in his family. Emilio’s younger brother was betrayed by the woman he loved, for a charming young man. He stabbed himself through the heart, and ten minutes before he did it, he said: ‘I would kill my rival but it would grieve *her* too much.’”

This mixture of nobleness and merriment, of dignity and childlike playfulness, made Francesca at that moment the most fascinating creature in the world. The dinner, and the evening that followed it, were bright with the gayety which the good news warranted, but Rodolphe was saddened.

“Can it be that she is light-minded?” he said to himself, as he returned to the Stopfers’ house. “She shared my grief, but I cannot share her joy.”

He blamed himself, and justified the young girl.

“No, she has not a trace of hypocrisy in her; she gives way to her impressions,” he thought; “and I am expecting her to be like a Parisian woman.”

The next day and the following days, in fact for twenty days, Rodolphe passed all his time at the Bergmann’s house, observing Francesca without allowing himself to think that he did so. The admiration of some minds does not exist without a certain element of penetration. The Frenchman saw in Francesca’s youthful imprudence the candid nature of a woman who was still undisciplined, fighting against her love at some moments, at others yielding herself gladly up to it. The old man treated her as a father would a daughter, and Francesca showed him in return a profound gratitude which kept alive her feelings of instinctive honor. These circumstances and this woman presented an impenetrable enigma to Rodolphe, the study of which bound him to Francesca even more and more.

The last days they were together were filled with secret joys, mingled with sadness, dissensions, even quarrels that were more charming than the hours when Rodolphe and Francesca understood each other. The young man was more and more entranced by the simplicity of a guileless tenderness, consistent with itself in all things, a tenderness which showed itself — already! — in jealousy of mere nothings.

“You love luxury!” he said to her one evening when she was expressing her desire to leave Gersau where she was deprived of so much.

“I!” she exclaimed. “I love luxury as I love the arts, as I love a picture by Raffaele, a fine horse, a beautiful day, or the bay of Naples — Emilio,” she added, “have I ever complained of our poverty?”

“You would not have been yourself if you had done so,” he answered gravely.

“After all,” she said, with a mischievous glance at her husband and Rodolphe, “is n’t it very natural that the middle classes should like grandeur? My feet,” she added, stretching out two charming little feet, “were not made to be tired. My hands” — and she held one out to Rodolphe — “do you think they were made to work? Leave us now,” she said to her husband. “I have something I want to say to him before we part.”

The old man went back into the salon with charming amiability; he had perfect confidence in his wife.

"I do not wish," she said to Rodolphe, "that you should accompany us to Geneva. Geneva is a gossiping place. Though I am above the foolish nonsense of society, I do not intend to be talked about — not for myself, but for *him*. It is my pride to be his glory; he has been, after all, my sole protector. We leave to-morrow, and you must stay here several days longer. When you come to Geneva, call first on my husband, and let him present you to me. Let us hide our deep and unalterable affection from the eyes of the world. I love you, and you know it. I will prove it to you thus: never shall you find in my conduct anything, no matter what, which can excite your jealousy."

She drew him to a corner of the gallery, took his head between her hands, kissed him on the forehead and went away, leaving him stupefied.

The next day he heard that they had left at day-break. Life at Gersau then became intolerable and he went to Vevey by the longest route, starting earlier than he ought to have done, so eager was he to be on the waters of the lake by which Francesca was awaiting him. He reached Geneva in the last week of October. Wishing to avoid the town itself, he took lodgings in a house at the Eaux-Vives, outside the ramparts. No sooner was he installed than he asked his landlord, an old jeweller, if some Italian refugees from Milan had lately settled in Geneva.

"Not that I know of," said the landlord. "The Prince and Princess Colonna from Rome have hired for three years the country-house of Monsieur Jeanrenaud, one of the most beautiful places on the lake. It stands between the villa Diodati and the country-house of Monsieur Lafin-de-Dieu, which the Vicomtesse de Beausséant has hired. Prince Colonna came there to meet his daughter and his son-in-law, Prince Gandolphini, a Neapolitan or, if you prefer it, a Sicilian, a former partisan of Murat and a victim of the last revolution. They are the last comers to Geneva, and they are not Milanese. I am told there were many negotiations, and it required all the influence of the Pope in behalf of the family of the Colonnas before a permit could be obtained from the King of Naples and the other powers enabling Prince and Princess Gandolphini to reside here. Geneva is always anxious not to displease the Holy-Alliance, to which she owes her independence. *Our* wisest plan is to cast no censure on the doings of foreign courts. There are many foreigners here, Russian and English."

"And a few Genevese?"

"Yes, monsieur. Our lake is so fine! Lord Byron lived seven years at the Villa Diodati, which all the world now goes to see, as it does Coppet and Ferney."

"Could you find out for me whether a bookseller and his wife from Milan, named Lamporani, have come

here during the last week ; he was one of the leaders of the last revolution."

"I can ask at the Strangers' Club," said the landlord.

The first walk Rodolphe took was naturally to the Villa Diodati, the residence of Lord Byron, to which the recent death of the great poet lent a renewed charm — for is not death the chrism of genius? The road from Eaux-Vives skirts the lake, and is, like all the Swiss roads, rather narrow ; in certain places it becomes, by the lay of the rising land, so contracted that two carriages can scarcely pass each other. A short distance before he came to the Jeanrenaud place, which he was approaching without being aware of it, Rodolphe heard the roll of a carriage behind him, and finding himself in a sort of gorge he sprang upon a ledge of rock to let the carriage pass. Naturally, he looked at it, — an elegant calèche drawn by two fine English horses. A sort of vertigo came over him as he saw Francesca, delightfully dressed, sitting in the carriage beside an old lady who was stiff as a cameo. A chasseur, glittering with gold lace, was behind the carriage. Francesca recognized Rodolphe, and smiled to see him standing like a statue on a pedestal. The carriage, which he followed with his eyes as it went up the hill, turned in at the gate of a country-seat, whither he hastened to follow it.

“ Who lives here ? ” he said to a gardener.

“ The Prince and Princess Colonna, also the Prince and Princess Gandolphini.”

“ Did they just drive in ? ”

“ Yes, monsieur.”

The veil fell from Rodolphe's eyes ; he saw clearly into the past.

“ If I could only be sure,” he said, “ that this is her last deception.”

He dreaded lest he had been the plaything of a mere caprice ; for he had heard others tell of what the *copriccio* of an Italian woman meant. But what a crime he had committed in the eyes of such a woman by taking her for a shopkeeper, a princess born a princess ! by supposing for a moment that the daughter of one of the most illustrious houses of the middle ages was the wife of a bookseller ! The thought of his blunder made Rodolphe all the more anxious to find out at once if he should be ignored and repulsed. He asked for Prince Gandolphini and sent in his card, and was immediately received by the pretended Lamporani, who came to meet him, greeted him with the perfect grace and affability of a Neapolitan, and took him out upon a terrace from which could be seen the whole panorama of Geneva, the Jura and its slopes covered with country-houses, and a broad stretch of the lake.

“ My wife, you see, is faithful to lakes,” he said,

after explaining the landscape to his guest. "We have a sort of concert this evening," he added, as they returned to the house. "I hope you can give the princess and myself the pleasure of seeing you there. Two months of companionship in poverty is equal to years of friendship."

Though devoured with curiosity Rodolphe did not dare ask to see the princess. He walked slowly back to the *Eaux-Vives*, thinking of the evening. In a few hours his love, immense as it was already, was enhanced by his anxiety and the expectation of events. He began to perceive the necessity of making himself a distinguished career before he could be, socially speaking, on a level with his idol. To his eyes Francesca now seemed lofty through the very simplicity and freedom of her conduct in Geneva. The stiff and haughty air of the Princess Colonna made him tremble with the fear that he should find enemies in the father and mother; at least he had every reason to think so, and the caution which Francesca had urged upon him now appeared only another proof of her tenderness. Was it not saying that she loved him, to be so anxious not to compromise the future?

At last nine o'clock struck. Rodolphe got into a carriage, and said, with an inward emotion that can readily be conceived, "To the Jeanrenaud place — Prince Gandolphini's."

He entered the salon, filled with strangers of the highest distinction, and was forced to stand with others in a group near the door, for a duo by Rossini was then being sung.

At last he saw Francesca, but without being seen by her. The princess was standing near the piano. Her beautiful hair, so long and abundant, was confined by a circlet of gold. Her face, lighted by the wax candles, was dazzling with the whiteness peculiar to Italian women, which presents its full effect only at night. She was in ball dress, which showed the fascinating shoulders, the girlish waist, the arms like those of an antique statue. Her glorious beauty was unrivalled, although there were charming English and Russian women present, also the prettiest women of Geneva and other Italians, among whom shone the illustrious Principessa di Varese and the famous singer Tinti, who was singing at the moment.

Rodolphe, leaning against the door-frame, looked at the princess with that fixed, persistent, magnetic gaze, charged with all the force of human will concentrated in the feeling called desire, which now took the form of violent command. Did the flame of that look touch Francesca? Or was she expecting every instant to see Rodolphe enter? At the end of a few moments her eyes turned to the door, as if drawn there by that current of love, and then, without hesitation, they plunged

into those of Rodolphe. A slight quiver stirred that magnificent face and beautiful body — the emotion of the soul reacted upon them. Francesca blushed. This exchange of looks, so rapid that it was only comparable to lightning, was like a lifetime to Rodolphe: but such happiness can be compared to nothing, — he was loved! The glorious princess had kept, there in the midst of her world, in the beautiful mansion she was inhabiting, the promise given by the poor exile, by the capricious girl of the lake cottage. The intoxication of such a moment makes a man a slave for life. A smile, gracious and significant, candid and triumphant, hovered on the lips of the princess, who, seeing that no one observed her, looked steadily at Rodolphe as if to beg his pardon for deceiving him as to her position.

The piece ended, Rodolphe was able to reach the prince, who at once took him up to his wife. The young man went through the ceremony of official presentation to the Prince and Princess Colonna and to Francesca. When it was over the latter was called upon to sing her part in the famous quartette *Mi manca la voce* which was taken by her, La Tinti, Genovese the celebrated tenor, and a well-known Italian prince, then in exile, whose voice, if he had not been a prince in his own right, would have made him one of the princes of art.

“Sit there,” said Francesca to Rodolphe, giving him

her own chair. "Ah!" she added, with a long aspiration, "I think there must be a mistake in my name; I seem to be a Princess Rodolphini!"

The words were said with a light-heartedness and charm which reminded him of the happy gayety at Gersau. He now enjoyed the delightful sensation of listening to the voice of an adored woman, sitting close beside her so that the stuff of her dress and the gauze of her scarf almost touched his cheek; and when at such a moment the song is *Mi manca la voce*, sung by four of the finest voices in Italy, it is easy to understand why the tears moistened Rodolphe's eyes.

In love, as in all things else perhaps, there are certain facts, trivial in themselves, but the result of a thousand little antecedent circumstances, the bearing of which becomes immense when the past is summed up and connected with the present. We may have felt a thousand times all the worth of the one we love, but a sudden occurrence, the perfect unison of two souls, brought about by a walk together, by a word, by some unexpected *proof* of love, lifts the sentiment to its highest reach. To represent this moral fact by an image which from the earliest ages of the world has been incontestably admitted, in every long chain there are points of attachment where the cohesion is closer than in the circuit of the links. This recognition between Rodolphe and Francesca, during this concert,

in presence of all the world, was one of those powerful couplings which fasten the present to the past and bind forever to the heart a true attachment. Perhaps it was to such bonds as these that Bossuet referred when he spoke of the rare moments of human happiness, — he who loved so keenly and so secretly.

Next to the pleasure of admiring the woman we love, is that of seeing her admired by others. Rodolphe enjoyed them both. Love is the treasure-house of memory ; and though that of Rodolphe was already amply filled, he kept on adding precious pearls, — smiles aside to him alone, stolen glances, inflections of her voice which Francesca found for him alone, making La Tinti pale with jealousy at the applause which followed them. Thus all the strength and power of desire — the will of his wishes — that special form of his soul, turned to the beautiful Roman woman, who became thenceforth and unalterably the source and the purpose of all his thoughts and actions. Rodolphe loved as every woman dreams of being loved, — with a force, a constancy, a tenacity which made Francesca the very fibre and substance of his heart ; he felt her like a purer blood mingling with his blood, a more perfect soul entering his soul ; he knew that thenceforth she would be forever beneath even his slightest efforts, as the golden sands of the Mediterranean lie beneath its waters. Every aspiration of his mind now possessed an active hope.

After some days had passed Francesca recognized the immensity of his love; but it was so natural, and so fully shared by her that she was not surprised by it — she was worthy of it.

“What is there so surprising,” she said to Rodolphe one day, as they walked together along the garden terrace, after she had just detected in him one of those touches of self-conceit so natural to Frenchmen when they express their feelings, “in loving a young and handsome woman who is artist enough to make her living like La Tinti, and who can give a man some of the enjoyments of vanity? Where is the dullard who would n’t be an Amadis under such circumstances? But this is not the point between you and me — *that* is to love with constancy, persistency, at a distance and though years of absence, with no other pleasure than to know ourselves beloved.”

“Alas!” said Rodolphe, “will you not think my fidelity devoid of all reality when you see me absorbed in the pursuits of inordinate ambition? Do you think that I would suffer you some day to exchange the noble name of Princess Gandolphini for that of a man who is obscure? I must become one of the great men of my country; I must be rich, distinguished, so that you may be proud of my name, as you are of your own Colonna!”

“I should be sorry if you did not have such feelings

in your heart," she said with a charming smile. "But do not wear yourself out in the struggle of ambition; keep young. They say that politics make men prematurely old."

The rarest thing in woman is a certain gayety which does not lessen tenderness. This mixture of deep feeling and the light-heartedness of youth added infinite attraction to all the rest of Francesca's charm. In it lies the key-note of her character; she laughed and was tender; she could rise to heights and return to merriment with an ease, a simplicity, which made her the delightful and winsome creature whose charm is known beyond the confines of her own Italy. Behind these womanly graces she concealed a thorough education, due to the semi-monastic and extremely monotonous life she led in the old castle of the Colonnas. In her childhood she was destined for the cloister, being the fourth child of the Prince and Princess Colonna; but the death of two brothers and a sister drew her suddenly from retirement to become one of the greatest heiresses in the Roman States. Her elder sister had been betrothed to Prince Gandolphini, one of the largest landowners in Sicily. Francesca was given to him that no disarrangement might take place in the family affairs. The Colonnas and the Gandolphinis had long intermarried.

From the time she was nine years old until she was

sixteen, Francesca, under the instructions of a monsignore belonging to the family, had read the library of the Colonnas, to employ and train her ardent imagination in the study of science, art, and letters. But she acquired from these studies a taste for independence and liberal ideas which cast her, and her husband with her, into the Revolution. Rodolphe at this time had no idea that Francesca knew Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The charming creature well understood that the first condition of a woman's education is that it shall be concealed.

Rodolphe remained the whole winter in Geneva. It passed like a day. When the spring came, and in spite of the exquisite enjoyment the companionship of a woman of mind, thoroughly informed, young, gay, and beautiful, gave him, he was conscious of cruel sufferings, borne courageously, though at times they showed in his face, in his bearing, in his words, — perhaps because he thought they were not shared. Sometimes he was irritated while admiring Francesca's calmness; for she appeared, like Englishwomen, to take a pride in showing nothing on her face, the serenity of which seemed to deny her love. Rodolphe would rather have seen her agitated; sometimes he accused her of want of feeling, in refutation of the common belief that Italian women are made up of feverish emotion.

“I am a Roman woman,” she replied gravely one

day when she took up seriously the half-jesting remarks that Rodolphe made to her on this point.

There seemed a depth of meaning in the tone of this reply which gave it the effect of savage irony, and it made Rodolphe quiver. The month of May was displaying the treasures of its young verdure, the sun had moments of strength as though it were mid-summer. Francesca and Rodolphe were leaning on the stone balustrade which, at an angle of the terrace where it projects above the lake, tops the wall of a flight of steps at which the boats are taken. From the neighboring villa, where the place of embarkation is somewhat similar, a wherry darted forth like a swan, with its flag run up and a crimson awning spread, beneath which a charming woman reclined on crimson cushions. her hair wreathed with natural flowers, while a young man, dressed as a sailor, rowed the boat, with all the more grace because he was doing it under her eyes.

“They are happy!” said Rodolphe, in a bitter tone. “Claire de Bourgogne, the last of the only house that was ever able to rival the kings of France —”

“Oh! she comes of an illegitimate branch, illegitimate, moreover, through its women.”

“At any rate, she is the Vicomtesse de Beauséant, and has not —”

“Hesitated — that is what you mean? — to bury

“ ‘Francesca,’ he said, taking her hand, ‘is there
a single regret in your heart?’ ”



Maximilienne Mayer.

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herself here with Monsieur Gaston de Nueil," said the daughter of the Colonnas. "She is only a French-woman; I am an Italian, my dear friend."

Francesca left the balustrade, leaving Rodolphe still there, and went to the farther end of the terrace, from which an extensive view of the lake is obtained. Observing that she walked slowly, the suspicion entered Rodolphe's mind that he had wounded that spirit, so candid, so wise, so proud, and so humble. He turned cold, and followed Francesca, who made him a sign that she wished to be alone; but he paid no attention to the warning, for he saw her tears. Tears from a nature so strong as hers!

"Francesca," he said, taking her hand, "is there a single regret in your heart?"

She was silent, but withdrew her hand and took her handkerchief to wipe her eyes.

"Forgive me," he said, as with a sudden impulse he darted forwards to dry those eyes with a kiss.

Francesca did not notice the passionate movement, so deeply was she moved. Rodolphe, thinking she consented, grew bolder; he caught her by the waist, strained her to his heart, and kissed her; but she freed herself with a magnificent action of offended modesty. Standing back two steps, and looking at him without anger but resolutely, she said: "You will leave to-night. We shall not see each other again till we meet in Naples."

In spite of the severity of this order it was carried out, for Francesca willed it.

On his return to Paris Rodolphe found at his house a portrait of the Princess Gandolphini, painted by Schinner as Schinner alone knows how to paint a portrait. This artist had passed through Geneva on his way to Italy. As he had positively refused to paint a number of women, Rodolphe did not think that the prince, who was extremely anxious for a portrait of his wife, had vanquished the painter's reluctance. But Francesca, no doubt, captivated him, and obtained — what was really a prodigy of success — an original portrait for Rodolphe and a copy for Emilio. This was told to Rodolphe in a charming and delightful letter, in which the thoughts made up for the stiffness imposed by the religion of conventions. He answered it; and thus began, never to end, a correspondence between Rodolphe and Francesca which was the only pleasure they allowed themselves.

Rodolphe, in the grasp of an ambition sanctified by love, went to work. He wanted, in the first place, money; and he embarked on an enterprise into which he flung every power he possessed and all his capital. But he had to struggle, with the inexperience of youth, against a duplicity which, in the end, triumphed over him. Three years were lost in that great enterprise — three years of efforts and of courage.

The ministry of Villèle fell at the time of Rodolphe's

disaster. The dauntless lover then thought to obtain from public life what industrial enterprise denied him. But before casting himself into the tempests of that career he went — all bleeding and suffering, to heal his wounds and gain fresh courage — to Naples, where the Prince and Princess Gandolphini were now recalled and reinstated in their position by order of the King. In the midst of his struggle this was a time of refreshment, full of sweetness. He passed three months at the Villa Gandolphini, cradled in hope.

On his return to Paris Rodolphe began once more the edifice of his fortunes. Already his talents had made him known; he was about to realize the hopes of his ambition; a position of eminence was promised to him in return for his devotion and for services rendered to the government. At that moment the revolution of July, 1830, broke forth, and again his bark foundered.

. SHE and God — they are the only witnesses of the bravest efforts, the boldest enterprises that a young man ever undertook, — a young man gifted with powers, but who, up to this time, has lacked the help of the god of fools, happiness! Yet this indefatigable athlete, sustained by Love, begins the conflict anew, inspired by a glance that is ever loving, by a heart that is ever true. All ye who love, pray for him!

III.

WHEN Mademoiselle de Watteville finished reading this tale, her cheeks were on fire, fever was in her veins, and she wept — for rage. This novel, written in the style of the literature then in fashion, was the first of its kind which Rosalie had ever devoured. Love was described there, if not by the hand of a master, certainly by a man who seemed to be relating his own impressions of it. Now truth, however ill-presented, will always touch the virgin soul; and here lies the secret of Rosalie's agitation, her fever, her tears, — she was jealous of Francesca Colonna. The girl had no doubt whatever of the sincerity of this poem; she felt certain that Albert had found a personal pleasure in relating the outset of his passion, concealing no doubt the names, perhaps the localities. Rosalie was seized with an infernal curiosity. What woman would not have desired as she did to know the real name of her rival? For — she loved. Reading these pages, which were like a contagion to her, she said to herself the solemn words: "I love." She loved Albert; she felt

in her heart a burning desire to struggle for him, to tear him from this unknown rival. The thought came to her that she knew nothing of music and was not handsome.

“He will never love me,” she said to herself.

That thought redoubled her desire to know if she was right, if Albert really loved an Italian princess, and if he were loved by her. During this fatal night the spirit of prompt decision which distinguished the famous Watteville displayed itself, to its fullest extent, in his descendant. She conceived those extravagant schemes round which the imaginations of young girls often revolve when, in the solitude to which some imprudent mothers condemn them, they are excited by an unexpected or stirring event which the system of repression to which they are subjected has neither foreseen nor prevented. She thought of descending by a ladder from the kiosk into Albert’s garden, and taking advantage of his being asleep to look through his window and see the interior of his study. She thought of writing to him, of breaking the bonds of Besancian social life by introducing him into the salon of the hôtel de Rupt. This latter enterprise, which would have seemed the height of impossibility to the Abbé de Grancey himself, was clinched by a thought.

“Yes!” she said to herself, “there are claims against my father for part of his Rouxey property; I’ll go

there ! If there is no lawsuit, I 'll bring one about, and then *he* will come to our house," she cried, springing from her bed to the window that she might see the bewitching light which illuminated *his* working hours. One o'clock struck ; he was still asleep.

" I shall see him when he wakes ; perhaps he will come to the window," she thought.

Just at that moment Mademoiselle de Watteville was witness of a little scene which placed in her hands the means of knowing Albert's secrets. By the light of the moon she saw two arms stretched from the kiosk, which were helping Jérôme, Albert's servant, to climb to the top of the wall and enter the arbor. In Jérôme's accomplice Rosalie at once recognized Mariette.

" **Mariette and Jérôme !**" she said to herself, "**Mariette !** such an ugly creature ! they ought to be ashamed of themselves."

Though Mariette was in fact horribly ugly and thirty-six years old, she had inherited certain lots of land. For seventeen years she had been in the employ of Madame de Watteville, who valued her devotion, her honesty, and her long service ; during this time she had economized and had no doubt invested her wages and her savings. Now, the laying by of ten louis a year, meant the possession, counting compound interest and her inherited land, of something like ten thousand francs. To Jérôme's eyes ten thousand francs changed

the laws of optics ; he thought Mariette's figure pretty, and he failed to see the pits and seams that small-pox had left on her flat and skinny face ; in his eyes the crooked mouth was straight, and ever since his service to the lawyer had brought him into the neighborhood of the hôtel de Rupt he had laid siege in form to the pious waiting-maid, who was quite as stiff and prudish as her mistress, and, like all ugly old maids, much more exacting than a pretty woman.

If the nocturnal scene in the kiosk is now explained to clear-sighted persons, it was far from being plain to Rosalie, who nevertheless obtained from it the most dangerous of all instructions, that of bad example. A mother brings up a daughter rigidly for seventeen years, and in one hour a servant-woman destroys that long and patient labor, sometimes by a word, often by a gesture. Rosalie went to bed again, not without thinking of the benefit she might obtain from her discovery.

The next morning, on her way to mass accompanied by Mariette (for Madame de Watteville was ill and unable to go out), Rosalie took her maid's arm, which greatly surprised the peasant-woman.

"Mariette," she said, "is Jérôme in his master's confidence?"

"I don't know, mademoiselle."

"Don't play the innocent with me," said Mademoiselle de Watteville dryly. "You let him kiss you

last night in the kiosk. I am no longer surprised that you took such interest in the improvements my mother has made in the garden."

Rosalie felt how Mariette trembled by the shaking of her arm.

"I don't wish you any harm," continued Rosalie. "You need n't be uneasy; I shall not say a word to my mother, and you can see Jérôme as much as you please."

"But, mademoiselle," said Mariette, "it is all proper. Jérôme means to marry me; he has no other thought."

"Then why do you let him come at night?"

Mariette, disconcerted, had no reply to make.

"Now listen, Mariette. I, too, love some one — in secret; no one knows it. After all, I am my father and mother's only child; therefore remember that you have more to expect from me than from any one else in the world."

"Certainly, mademoiselle, and you may count on me for life and death," cried Mariette, delighted at this unexpected turn of events.

"In the first place, silence for silence," went on Rosalie. "I don't wish to marry Monsieur de Soulas, but I do wish a certain thing. My good-will to you depends on it."

"What is it?" asked Mariette.

"I want to see the letters which Monsieur Savaron gives Jérôme to put in the post."

“What will you do with them?” asked Mariette, frightened.

“Oh, merely read them — you shall put them in the post yourself afterwards. It will only cause a little delay, that’s all.”

At that moment Mademoiselle de Watteville and Mariette entered the church, and each was occupied by her own reflections instead of attending to the Ordinary of the Mass.

“Good heavens! how many sins there are in it?” thought Mariette.

Rosalie, whose soul, head, and heart were completely upset by the reading of that novel, felt more and more certain it was a history written for the eyes of her rival. By dint of reflecting, as children do, perpetually on one thing, she ended by supposing that the “*Revue de l’Est*” must certainly be sent to the woman Albert loved.

“Oh!” she said to herself on her knees, her head in her hands in the attitude of a person absorbed in prayer, “oh, how can I get my father to examine the list of subscribers to whom they send the review?”

After breakfast she walked round the garden with her father, petting him, and finally led him into the kiosk.

“Don’t you suppose, my dear little papa,” she said, “that our *Revue* is sent to foreign countries?”

“Why it is only just beginning —”

“I am sure it is sent to foreigners.”

“Not likely.”

“Go and find out, and take the names of the foreign subscribers.”

Two hours later Monsieur de Watteville said to his daughter: “I was right; there is not a single subscriber in foreign countries. They expect some from Berne, Neufchâtel, and Geneva. There is one copy sent to Italy, but that is done gratuitously, to a Milanese lady at her country-place at Belgirate on the Lago Maggiore.”

“What’s her name?” said Rosalie quickly.

“The Duchesse d’Argaiolo.”

“Do you know her, papa?”

“I have heard of her. She was born Princess Soderini. She is a Florentine, a very great lady and as rich as her husband, who has one of the largest fortunes in all Lombardy. Their villa on the Lago Maggiore is one of the sights of Italy.”

Two days later Mariette brought the following letter to Mademoiselle de Watteville: —

“TO MONSIEUR LÉOPOLD HANNEQUIN.

“BESANÇON, November, 1834.

“You see, my dear friend, that I am at Besançon while you thought me travelling. I wished to tell you

nothing of my plans until success came to them—the dawn has come, at last! Yes, dear Léopold, after the failure of so many enterprises in which I spent my best heart's blood, my every effort, and used such courage, I have now resolved to do as you did, — take the beaten track, the high-road, the longest, the surest. I see you jump in your office-chair! But do not think there is any change in my inner life, in the secret hopes which are known to you alone, — and even so with the reserves which She exacted.

“The upshot of the first enterprise in which I put all my hopes, and which failed through the treachery of my partners who made common cause to rob me, — me, to whose activity they owed all, — made me renounce all schemes for pecuniary success, after losing three years of my life, one of which was consumed in law-suits. Perhaps I might have been worse off than I was if I had not been compelled to study law when I was twenty. I next resolved to enter political life, hoping to rise by degrees until I should some day be included among the elevations to the peerage under the title of Comte Albert Savaron de Savarus, and thus revive in France a noble name extinct in Belgium, although I am, as you know, neither legitimate nor legitimatized.”

“Ah! I was sure of it,” cried Rosalie, letting fall the letter, “he is noble!”

“ You know what conscientious pains I took as a devoted, obscure, but useful journalist, and how faithfully I discharged the duties of secretary to that statesman who, up to 1829, was faithful to me. The revolution of 1830 threw me back to nothingness ; and then, just as my name was beginning to shine, — at the very moment when as Master of petitions I was about to become a necessary part of the political engine, — I committed the blunder of remaining faithful to the vanquished side and fighting for their cause, with no help from them. Ah ! why was I only thirty-three years old, and why did I not apply to you to make me eligible ?

“ I hid all my perils and my devoted efforts from you, and why ? — because I had faith, and you would not have agreed with me. Ten months ago, when you saw me so gay, apparently so contented, writing my political articles, despair was in my heart. I was then thirty-seven years old, without a name, possessing two thousand francs for my whole fortune, and having just failed in a noble enterprise, a daily paper that spoke for the needs of the future and not to the passions of the moment. I knew not where to look, nor what course to take. I was beside myself. I wandered, gloomy and bleeding, through the solitary places of that Paris which had escaped me, thinking of my foiled ambitions, but never yielding them. Oh ! what

letters of rage and madness have I not written to Her, my second conscience, my other self! Sometimes I thought: 'Why make so vast a scheme for life? why desire all things? why not await happiness, employing my days in some half-mechanical occupation?

"Thus thinking, I looked about me for some modest position by which I could live. I was just about to accept the place of manager of a newspaper under an editor who knew but little, a man ambitious only for money, when a species of terror seized me.

" 'Would She accept as a husband a lover who had fallen so low?' I said to myself.

"This thought made me once more twenty-two years old. Oh! my dear Léopold, how the soul wears out under such perplexities. What the eagles must suffer in a cage! and the lions! They suffer as Napoleon suffered, not at St. Helena, but on the quai of the Tuileries, August the tenth, when he saw Louis XVI. defending himself so foolishly, — he who could have quelled the sedition, as he did later on the same spot in Vendémiaire. Well, my life has had the equal of that one day's suffering spread over every day for four long years. How many speeches before the Chamber have I not uttered aloud as I walked the lonely paths of the Bois de Boulogne! That wasted eloquence did at least unlimber my tongue and accustom my mind to formulate its thought in words. While I was thus

being tortured you were married, you paid off the cost of your practice, became assistant-mayor of your arrondissement, and won the cross of the Legion of honor for your wound at Saint-Merri.

“When I was a child and teased cockchafers, the poor insects used to make motions which sent me almost into a fever, — I mean their efforts to fly without being able to rise, although they spread their wings. The boys used to say, ‘They are counting.’ Was it sympathy for the poor insects? was it a vision of my future? Oh! to spread my wings and not have the power to fly! that is my fate ever since the failure of that fine enterprise in which others discouraged me, but which has since made the fortune of four families.

“At last, seven months ago, I resolved to make myself a name at the Paris bar, seeing how many empty places were left by the political advancement of lawyers to eminent places under government. But, recollecting the rivalries I had met with in journalism, and how difficult it is to make one’s self first known in any way in Paris, that arena so filled with distinguished champions, I came to a resolution. very hard on myself but certain in its effects, and possibly more rapid in results than any other. You had often told me, in our talks together, of the social condition of Besançon, the impossibility of a stranger entering its social circles, making a sensation, marrying, or succeeding in any way whatever.

It was there that I determined to plant my flag-staff, thinking that I should find no rivals at any rate, and be all alone in seeking my return as deputy. The Besancians did not wish to know strangers, — well, then, they should never know me; society denied them admittance to its salons, — I would never seek it. I would go nowhere, not even into the streets. But there is a class which, as you know, makes the deputies to the Chamber; I mean the commercial class; I would make a special study of commercial questions (about which I knew much already); I would win cases, heal differences, and become the most powerful lawyer before the courts of commerce at Besançon. Later, I would found a Review, in which the interests of the place would be forwarded, or I would awaken a sense of them, and make them living and active questions. When I had thus won silently a sufficient number of suffrages I would give my name for election. They might disdain, even for a length of time, an unknown lawyer, but something would happen to bring me forward, some gratuitous cause, some case which none of the other lawyers cared to defend. I knew that if I once spoke I was sure of success.

“ Well, my dear Léopold, I packed my library in eleven cases. I bought law-books, and I sent the whole, together with my furniture, by carrier to Besançon. I took out my diplomas, collected three thousand

francs in money, and bade you good-by. The mail-coach brought me to Besançon, where, in less than three days, I chose a small lodging which looks out on gardens. Here I have sumptuously arranged a private study, where I spend my days and nights. Here the portrait of my idol shines, — She, to whom my life is vowed; who fills it, who is the impulse of my efforts, the secret of my courage, the origin of my talents. When my furniture and books arrived I engaged an intelligent servant, and here I have lived for the last five months like a marmot in winter.

“I ought to say that my name had been duly inscribed on the register of lawyers. At last, I was one day appointed by the judge to defend a miserable prisoner at the assizes. No doubt they wanted to hear what I could do. One of the most influential men of business in Besançon happened to be on the jury, and he had, at the time, a difficult case of his own on hand. I did all that it was possible to do for my client, and met with complete success. The man was declared innocent, and I was able to bring about, most dramatically, the arrest of the real culprits, who were among the witnesses for the prosecution. The court itself shared the admiration of the public. I saved the pride of the prosecuting officer by pointing out the almost impossibility of discovering a plot so carefully laid. The result of this case was that I won the patronage of

the rich and influential merchant, and I also won his case. Soon after that the Chapter of the cathedral selected me as their lawyer in a suit against the town which had lasted four years. This I also won. So, by three suits, I became the most important lawyer in the Franche-Comté.

“But, all the same, I bury my own life in solitude, and thus I conceal my ambitions. I have contracted habits which excuse me from accepting all invitations. I can only be consulted from six to eight o’clock in the morning. I go to bed after dinner, and work during the night. The vicar-general, an able man and very influential, who was the one to entrust me with the Chapter’s case (then nearly lost) naturally spoke of recompense. ‘Monsieur,’ I said, ‘I will win your case, but I do not wish a fee — I wish something more than that’ (here the abbé started). ‘I must tell you that I shall lose a great deal by taking your case and by making myself the adversary of the town. I came here desiring to be made deputy; I wish to take none but commercial cases, because it is the business men who elect the deputies, and they will distrust me if I plead for *priests* — for priests you are in their eyes. If I consent to take your case it is because I was in 1828 the private secretary of’ (naming the minister — much surprise on the abbé’s part), ‘and Master of petitions under my own name of Albert de Savarus’ (still

greater surprise). 'I am faithful to the principles of Monarchy; but, inasmuch as you are not in the majority in Besançon I must obtain the votes of the bourgeoisie. Therefore, the fee that I ask is the votes that you can obtain for me when the opportune moment comes. Let us keep this to ourselves, and I will defend gratis the interests of the diocese.' When he came to thank me after the cause was won he brought a bank-note of five hundred francs and whispered in my ear, 'You shall have the votes all the same.' In the five conferences that we had together I feel sure that I made myself a friend in that man.

"At the present time I am overwhelmed with business, and can take only that of the merchants; in fact, I say openly that questions of commerce are my specialty. These tactics have rallied the business men to me, and I am able to pick out the most influential among them. So everything is going well. In a few months I shall find a house in Besançon and buy it, and thus obtain a settlement for election. I count on you to lend me the money for this purchase. If I die, or fail of my purpose, there will not be serious loss. The interest on the money will be met by the rental, and I will take good care that you lose nothing on the mortgage.

"Ah! my dear Léopold, no gambler, with the last of his fortune in his pocket and staking it at the Cercle

des Étrangers on a single throw which is to make him rich or ruined, ever had such ringing in his ears, such nervous sweat on his hands, such inward tremblings of his body as I live through every day while playing this my last stake in the game of ambition. Alas! dear and only friend, the struggle has now lasted ten years. This battle with men and things, in which I have ceaselessly expended my strength and my energy, and strained my will to its utmost tension, has sapped me, so to speak, within. With every appearance of health and strength, I feel I am broken down. Every day carries away with it some shred of my inner life. At each new effort I feel that I can never make another. I have no strength left for anything but happiness, and if it does not come to lay its crown of roses on my head, the *I* that I am can exist no longer — I shall be a thing destroyed; I shall desire nothing more, I can be nothing more in this world. You know well that the power, the fame, the immense moral success I seek is but a secondary thing; for me it is only a means to bliss, the pedestal for my Idol.

“To attain my end and die, like the runners of antiquity! to see success and death together on the threshold of my door! to obtain her I love when love expires! to lose the power to enjoy when I have won the right to happiness — oh! how many men there are who meet this fate!

“Of a surety there comes a moment when Tantalus stops short, crosses his arms, and defies all hell by refusing to endure his pangs eternally. Léopold, I shall have reached that point if my hopes fail me now; if, after grovelling in the dust of this province, after prowling like a famished tiger round these merchants, these electors, to win their votes, if after giving my time, — *my time*, which I would fain have spent on the Lago Maggiore, looking at the water her eyes look at, lying beneath those eyes, hearing that voice, — I should fail to reach the Chamber and win the halo which my name must wear before she takes it.

“But more than that, Léopold; there are days when I feel an indefinable languor: a deadly disgust of all things rises in my soul, more especially if, in revery, my thoughts have dwelt in advance on the joys of happy love. Can it be that our passionate desires have but a certain amount of strength? do they perish through too great an emission of their vitality? But, after all, my life *is* beautiful, — illuminated by faith, by work, by love! Adieu, my friend; I kiss your children and beg you to recall me to the kind remembrance of your excellent wife.

“ALBERT.”

Rosalie read this letter twice, and the general meaning of it entered her mind. She penetrated suddenly into Albert's past life; for her awakened intellect ex-

plained to her many details and made her comprehend their bearing. Connecting the confidences in this letter with the novel published in the review, she was able to understand Albert thoroughly. She magnified, not unnaturally, the proportions, actually great, of his fine soul, and the power of his firm will, and her love became thenceforth a passion, the violence of which was increased by the vigor of her youth, the dulness of her secluded life, and the inherited energy of her character. That a young girl should love is simply the effect of natural law, but when her need of affection fastens upon a remarkable man it mingles with it an enthusiasm ever ready to gush forth in all young hearts. Consequently it was not many days before *Mademoiselle de Watteville's* feelings reached a phase of morbid and very dangerous excitement. The baroness was at this time quite satisfied with the girl, who, under the sway of her private thoughts, no longer resisted her mother, but on the contrary, seemed absorbed in their various feminine occupations and realized the ideal of a submissive daughter.

The lawyer, meantime, had two or three cases weekly before the courts. Overwhelmed with work, he nevertheless found time to do it all and to follow up the interests of the review. He neglected no means of success; he studied the lists of the *Besançian* electors, and sought to discover their interests,

their characters, their various likings, their antipathies. A cardinal wishing to be elected pope never took greater trouble. But he kept himself and his life hidden, — convinced that the more secret his influence was, the more real and powerful it would become.

One evening, when Mariette came to dress Rosalie for a party, she gave her (not without groaning in spirit over such abuse of confidence) a sealed letter, the address of which made Mademoiselle de Watteville tremble and turn red and pale alternately. It read : —

TO MADAME LA DUCHESSE D'ARGAIOLO.

(née Princesse Soderini)

à Belgirate,

Lago Maggiore.

Italy.

To Rosalie's eyes those words shone with fire, as did the "Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" to the eyes of Belshazzar. After hiding the letter she went downstairs to accompany her mother to Madame de Chavoncourt's, and during the whole of that interminable evening she was a prey to scruples and remorse. Already she had endured much shame for having violated her honor and read the letter from Albert to Léopold. She had several times asked herself whether, if the noble Albert knew of her crime, all the more infamous because it

could not be punished, he would respect her. Conscience answered No! vehemently. She had expiated her fault by enduring various penances: she fasted, she stayed on her knees for hours with her arms crossed on her breast, repeating prayers. She compelled Mariette to perform the same acts of repentance; the sincerest asceticism mingled with her passion and made it all the more dangerous.

“Shall I — or shall I not — read that letter?” she was saying to herself all the while that she was talking with the young de Chavoncourts. One of them was sixteen, the other seventeen and a half. Rosalie now considered her two friends as children because they did not love in secret. “If I do read it,” she said to herself, after floating an hour between yes and no, “it shall certainly be the last. As I did so much to know what he said to his friend, why not do the same to know what he says to *her*?” If it is a dreadful crime is it not also a proof of love? Oh! Albert, am I not in truth your wife?”

When Rosalie was in bed she opened the letter. It was dated from day to day so as to give the duchess a faithful picture of Albert's life and feelings.

“25th.

“MY DEAR SOUL, — All goes well. To the conquests I have already made, I have just added another, — a precious one. I have rendered some service to

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the man in Besançon who is most influential in the matter of elections. Like those critics who make the reputation of others without ever being able to make one for themselves, he elects deputies though he has never been elected himself. The worthy man is anxious to prove his gratitude as cheaply as possible, in fact without drawing his purse-strings; and he said to me to-day, 'Should you like to enter the Chamber? I can easily have you nominated.' To this I replied, hypocritically, 'If I should resolve to enter the political arena it would be to devote myself to the interests of La Comté, which I like, and where I have been appreciated.' 'Very good,' he said, 'we will decide on you,' and through you we shall get an influence in the Chamber, for you are certain to distinguish yourself.'

"And so, my dear loved angel, in spite of all you say, my persistency is about to win the crown. Before long, I shall speak from the French tribune to my country, to Europe. My name will be brought to you by the hundred voices of the French press.

"Yes, I came, as you said, old to Besançon, and Besançon has made me older still; but, like Sixtus the Fifth, I shall be young on the morrow of my election. I shall enter my real life, my sphere. Shall we not then be equals? The Comte Savaron de Savarus, ambassador to I know not where, can surely aspire to marry a Princess Soderini. Success rejuvenates men

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whom successive struggles have kept alive. Oh, my dear Life! with what joy did I dart just now from my library to my study, to thy dear portrait, that I might tell it of this success before writing it to my angel. Yes, the votes I have won myself, those of the vicar-general, and those of this client make my election a certainty.

“26th.

“We are now in the twelfth year since that happy evening when, by a glance, the beautiful duchess ratified the promises of the exiled Francesca. Ah! dearest, you are now thirty-two, and I am thirty-five; the dear duke is seventy-seven, that is, ten years older than our united ages, and his health is still good. I have as much patience as I have love. In fact, I need a few more years to bring my fortunes to the level of your name. You see, dear, I am gay, I can laugh to-day; and this is the effect of hope. Sadness or gayety, all comes to me from you. The hope of success sends me back to the morrow of the day when I first saw you, when my life joined itself to yours as the earth to the sun. It is now eleven years and more since I came to that villa on the Lake of Constance! Eleven years that I cry to you, that you shine upon my life like a star too high in the heavens for man to reach.

“27th.

“No, dear, do not go to Milan: stay at Belgrate. Milan terrifies me. I cannot endure that Milanese

fashion of gossiping every evening at La Scala with a dozen persons, among whom it is impossible to believe there will not be some to say sweet things to you. To me, solitude is like amber in the bosom of which an insect lives eternally in its immutable beauty. The soul and the body of a woman thus remain in all the purity of their earliest youth. Can it be that you regret those *Tedeschi*?

“28th.

“Will they never finish your bust? I long to have you in marble, in painting, in miniature, in all ways — to cheat my impatience. I am constantly expecting that view of Belgirate to the south, and also that of the gallery. They are the only ones still wanting to my collection. I am so busy that to-day I can tell you nothing but a nothing, but that nothing is ALL. Was it not out of nothing that God made the world? My nothing is a word — the word of God: *I love thee*.

“30th.

“Ah! I have just received your journal. Thanks for your punctuality. So it did give you pleasure to read the story of our first acquaintance thus written down? Alas! much as I veiled it. I feared I should offend you. A review without a novel, you know, is like a lady without hair. Having no faculty for story-making myself, and being in despair, I took the only poetry that is in my soul, the only tale that is in my memory, and I told it in the tone in which alone it

could be told, never ceasing for one moment to think of you as I wrote the sole literary fragment which has ever come from my heart, I cannot say my pen. Did you laugh at the transformation of your surly Sormano into Gina?

“ You ask about my health, — better, much, than in Paris. Though I work incessantly the quiet of everything about me has an influence on my soul. That which fatigues and ages, dear love, are the pains of mortified vanity, the perpetual irritations of Parisian life, the contests of rival ambitions. Tranquillity is a balm. If you knew what pleasure your letter gives me, that good, long letter in which you tell me all the little incidents of your life — No, you women will never know the degree of interest which a true lover takes in such daily trifles. It gives me intense pleasure to look at that specimen of your new gown; how can I help caring to know how you are dressed; whether your beautiful forehead is scratched; whether our French authors please you; whether those poems of Canalis stirred your feelings? I read all that you read. There is not a word in your letter, even to your walk by the lake, that does not touch me; it is all beautiful, sweet, and lovely as your soul. O flower divine and long adored, how could I ever have lived without these precious letters which, for eleven years, have sustained me on my struggling way, like a beacon,

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like a perfume, like a measured chant, like a divine nourishment, like all that consoles and gives a charm to life. Let them never fail me. If you knew my anxiety on the days before they are due, and my sufferings if anything delays them? Is she ill? is it *he*? I live between heaven and hell; sometimes I am almost mad. *O mia cara diva*, continue to cultivate your music; exercise your voice; study. I am happy indeed in the similarity of our pursuits; even our hours are the same, so that in fact, though parted by the Alps, we live in precisely the same manner. This thought charms me and gives me courage. When I argued a case for the first time (this I have not yet told you) I fancied that you were listening, and I suddenly felt within me that influx of inspiration which puts the poet above humanity. If I go to the Chamber, oh, you will, you *must* come to Paris and be present at my first session.

“30th, at night.

“Ah! Francesca, how I love you! Alas! I have put too many things into my love, into my hopes. A single mishap would send my ship, too heavily freighted, to the bottom, engulfing my life. It is now three years since I have seen you! — the very idea of going to Belgirate makes my heart beat so violently that I must stop writing. To see you, only to hear that childlike, caressing voice! to embrace, by the eyes alone, that ivory skin, so dazzling with light,

beneath which your noble thoughts are visible! to watch those fingers as they touch the keys, to receive your soul in a look, your heart in the tones of an *Oimé!* or an *Alberto!* to walk beside you among the orange-trees in bloom, to live a few months with you in the bosom of that glorious landscape — ah, that is life! What folly to be rushing after power, name, a fortune! All is at Belgirate: there is poesy; there is fame! Why did I not stay there and be your bailiff, or, as the dear tyrant whom we cannot hate proposed to me, as your *cavaliere servente* — but *that* our ardent passion would not suffer us to accept. Adieu, dear angel; you must forgive my next sadness in remembrance of this gayety — which falls like a ray from that torch of happiness which has hitherto seemed to me too like an *ignis-fatuus*."

"How he loves her!" cried Rosalie, letting fall the letter, which seemed to her too heavy to hold. "To write like that at the end of eleven years!"

"Marianne," said Mademoiselle de Watteville the next morning to her maid, "put that letter in the post and tell Jérôme that I know all I wish to know, and that in future he is to serve Monsieur Albert faithfully. We will confess these sins, but without saying to whom the letters belonged nor to whom they were going. I have done wrong; and I alone am to blame."

“Mademoiselle has been crying,” said Mariette.

“Yes, and I don’t want my mother to notice it. Give me some cold water.”

In the midst of the tumults of her passion Rosalie often listened to the voice of her conscience. Touched by the wonderful fidelity of these two hearts, she had just said her prayers, admitting that she must resign herself, and respect the happiness of two beings worthy of each other, submissive to their fate and awaiting the will of God, without attempting any action or even allowing any wish that was criminal. She felt better in soul, she even obtained a certain inward satisfaction, after taking a resolution which the rectitude of youth dictated to her. Besides, she was encouraged in it by the natural thought of a young girl — was she not sacrificing herself for *him*?

“She does not know how to love,” thought Rosalie. “I would sacrifice everything to a man who loved me like that. To be loved! — when and by whom shall I be loved? That young Monsieur de Soulas loves my money; if I were poor he would n’t dream of me.”

“Rosalie, my dear, what are you thinking of? you are going outside the pattern,” said the baroness to her daughter, who was doing a pair of slippers in worsted-work for her father.

IV.

ROSALIE spent the whole winter of 1834-1835 in secret and tumultuous agitation; but in the spring, during the month of April, when she reached her nineteenth birthday, she began to tell herself that it might be well to get the better of a Duchesse d'Argaiolo. In the silence and solitude of her life the prospect of such a struggle revived her passion and all her evil thoughts. She developed a romantic daring in making plan after plan of operations. Though such characters are exceptional, there do exist, unfortunately, too many Rosalies, and this history contains a warning by which they ought to profit.

During this winter Albert Savarus had made immense though silent progress in Besançon. Sure of success, he was now impatiently awaiting the dissolution of the Chamber. He had gained, among the men of the *juste-milieu*, one of the builders of Besançon, a rich contractor, who wielded a great influence.

• • The Romans, wherever they settled, took immense trouble and spent enormous sums to obtain unlimited

supplies of good water in all the towns of their empire. At Besançon they drank the water from the Arcier, a mountain at some distance from the town. Besançon stands in the middle of a horse-shoe formed by the river Doubs. Therefore, to repair the Roman aqueduct for the purpose of drinking the water the Romans drank in a town surrounded by a river is one of those apparent absurdities which could obtain acceptance only in a province where the most exemplary seriousness reigns. But if this fancy did enter the mind of the Besancians, it would need a great outlay to carry it out, and such outlay would benefit contractors. Albert Savarus had made up his mind that the water of the Doubs was only fit to run under a suspension bridge, and that no water was suitable for drinking purposes except that from the mountain. Articles on this subject appeared in the "*Revue de l'Est*," which were found to express the ideas of the business community of Besançon. The nobles and bourgeois, the *juste-milieu* and the legitimists, the government and the opposition were all agreed that they would drink their water through the Roman aqueduct and enjoy the benefits of a suspension bridge as well. The question of the Arcier became the leading topic of the day. At Besançon, as in all other places, there were secret interests which sprang into a vigorous vitality at the prospect. Cautious persons who opposed these schemes

(there were but few of them, it is true) were regarded as blockheads. The whole town busied itself with the two projects of Albert Savarus.

After eighteen months of subterraneous work, that ambitious man had actually succeeded, in the most stagnant town in France and the most refractory under foreign influence, in stirring public opinion deeply, and in pulling, as the saying is, the wires of a positive influence without once leaving his own home. He had solved the singular problem of becoming powerful without the slightest popularity.

During this winter he won seven cases for the clergy of Besançon, and at times he drew long breaths of relief at the thought of his assured triumph. The immense desire which led him to draw so many interests into his field of action, and to invent so many resources, absorbed all the powers of his soul, already strained too heavily. People praised his disinterested conduct; he accepted without remark the fees that his clients offered him. But such disinterestedness was really a form of moral usury; he expected a payment greater in his eyes than all the gold in the kingdom. He had bought, in October, 1834, the house of a merchant whose affairs were involved, and he had paid for it with money advanced by Léopold Hannequin. The ownership of this property made him eligible for election.

“You are certainly a very remarkable man,” the

Abbé de Grancey said to him, having closely observed and fathomed much of his character. The vicar-general had brought with him an ecclesiastic who wanted legal advice. "You are a priest who has missed his vocation."

The remark struck Savarus forcibly.

By this time Rosalie had decided, with the strong will of a fragile young girl, to bring Monsieur Savarus into her mother's salon and present him to the society of the hôtel de Rupt. Her desires were limited, so far, to the pleasure of seeing Albert and listening to him. She had compromised with her conscience, so to speak, and such compromises are usually mere truces.

Les Rouxey, the patrimonial estate of the Watteilles, produced the sum of ten thousand francs a year, net; but in other hands it would have brought in more. The careless indifference of the baron, whose wife had an income of forty thousand, left Les Rouxey to the management of a sort of Maître Jacques, an old family servant named Modinier. Still, whenever the baron and baroness wished to stay in the country they usually went to Les Rouxey, which is very picturesquely situated. The house, the park, in fact the whole place was created by the famous Watteville, who, in his active old age, was passionately fond of this beautiful spot.

Between two little alps, and two peaks, the summits of which are bare and are called, respectively, the Great and the Little Rouzey, and across the gorgé where the water of these mountains and that of the Dent de Vilard flow to meet the delightful sources of the Doubs, the great Watteville took it into his head to build an enormous dam, leaving two outlets to take the overflow. He thus obtained a charming lake, and, at the outlets, two cascades, which, uniting at some little distance below their fall, formed a stream that watered the dry and uncultivated valley, which had hitherto been only devastated by the rushing torrents from the hills. He enclosed this lake, valley, and the two hills, and built a small country-house or hermitage near the dam, bringing to the spot all the soil which it was necessary to remove to make the bed of the river below the falls, and also that of the various streamlets for irrigation.

When the Baron de Watteville made this lake he owned the two Rouzey mountains, but not the upper valley which he thus flooded, and through which the country people had always had a right of way to the Dent de Vilard, which closes this horseshoe valley at its upper end. But the savage old man inspired such terror that during his lifetime no remonstrance was made by the inhabitants of Riceys, a little village lying on the slopes of the Dent de Vilard. Before

the baron died he had built a wall from one Rouxey mountain to the other, at the foot of the Dent de Vilard. so as not to inundate the two valleys which open into the Rouxey gorge on either side of the Vilard peak. He and his heirs thus became the protectors of the village of Riceys. and so maintained their usurpation. This old murderer, renegade, and former Abbé de Watteville ended his career by planting trees and constructing a fine road on the flank of one of the Rouxeys, which led into the great mail highway. Belonging to the park and the château were large ill cultivated domains, chalets on the slopes of the two mountains, and woods as yet unexplored. All was wild and solitary, guarded by Nature only, and left to the tangle of vegetation, but full of sublime nooks and aspects.

It is unnecessary to burden this history with a detailed account of the efforts and schemes, bearing the imprint of genius, by which Rosalie contrived, without exciting any suspicion, to attain her end. It is enough to say that she apparently obeyed her mother when she left Besançon in May, 1835, in an old travelling-carriage drawn by two good hired horses, and accompanied her father for a little visit to Les Rouxey.

Love explains all to young girls. When she rose on the morning after her arrival, and saw from her

bedroom window the beautiful sheet of water, above which the mists were rising like smoke and floating upward among the pines and larches which clothed the slopes of the mountain until they reached the summit, Mademoiselle de Watteville gave a cry of admiration.

“*They* loved each other beside a lake! *She* is by a lake! Yes, a lake is full of love.”

A lake fed by snows has the colors of an opal and the transparency of a diamond; and if shut in, like that of Rouzey, between two granite ledges clothed with black firs, where silence reigns, the silence of the steppes or the prairies, it inspires every one with the admiration which forced a cry from Rosalie.

“We owe that to the famous Watteville,” said her father.

“He wanted to win pardon for his crimes,” said the girl. “Let us get into that boat and go to the farther end of the lake; it will give us an appetite for breakfast.”

The baron sent for two young gardeners who knew how to row, and took his prime minister, Modinier, with him. They were soon at the upper end of the lake, which is bounded by the Dent de Vilard, the Jungfrau of this lesser Switzerland.

“Here we are, Monsieur le baron,” said Modinier,

making a sign to the two rowers to fasten the boat.

“Will you come and look at it?”

“Look at what?” asked Rosalie.

“Oh, nothing,” said the baron. “However, you are such a discreet girl, and we have had so many secrets together, that I can safely tell you what is troubling me. Since 1830, difficulties have sprung up between me and the township of Riceys about the Dent de Vilard; and I want to settle them without your mother finding it out; for she is so obstinate she is capable of setting everything on fire and flames; especially if she discovers that the mayor of Riceys, a republican, has invented this claim merely to ingratiate himself with his people.”

Rosalie had the coolness to conceal her joy so as to act with greater force upon her father.

“What claim?” she asked.

“Mademoiselle,” said Modinier, “the people of Riceys have long had the right of pasture and of cutting wood on their side of the Dent de Vilard. Now Monsieur Chantonnet, their mayor since 1830, insists that the mountain belongs wholly to his township, and that over a hundred years ago the villagers had a right of way through our land. You see, we should have no privacy at all in that case. Besides, this brute would soon say—what the old men of Riceys say now—that the whole ground the lake covers was

unlawfully taken by the Abbé de Watteville, — and that, of course, would be the ruin of Les Rouxey."

"Unfortunately, my dear, between ourselves, that's all true," said the baron, candidly; "the land is a usurpation, legalized by the lapse of time. So, to prevent future trouble, I want to have my boundaries amicably settled; and when that is done I shall build a wall to mark them."

"If you yield to the democracy," said Rosalie, "it will eat you up. You ought to have threatened the Riceys people."

"That is just what I was saying to Monsieur last night," remarked Modinier. "And to strengthen it, I want him to find out if there are not, on this side of the Dent or on the other, somewhere, the signs of a boundary."

"My dear father," said Rosalie, returning to the boat, "I agree with Modinier. If you want to maintain your rights on the Dent de Vilard, you should act promptly, and obtain a legal decision which will secure you against the attempts of this Chantonuit. What are you afraid of? Employ that famous Monsieur Savarus; secure him at once, for fear Chantonuit should engage him for the township. The man who won the suit of the Chapter against the town will certainly be able to win that of the Watteilles against Riceys. Besides," she added, "Les Rouxey will one day be

mine (not for a long while yet, I hope) ; well, then, don't leave me at the mercy of a lawsuit. I like this place ; I shall often live here ; I shall improve it as much as I am able. On those slopes," she said, pointing to the sides of the hills, "I should thin out the trees and make delightful English gardens. Let us go back to Besançon now, and return with the Abbé de Grancey, Monsieur Savarus, and my mother, if she chooses to come. Then you can make up your mind ; but, if I were you, I should decide now. You are named Watteville, and yet you are afraid of a fight ! If you do lose your suit — come, I'll promise never to blame you."

"Oh, if you look at it that way," said the baron, "I am willing. I will go and see that lawyer."

"After all, a lawsuit is very amusing. It will give some interest to life ; there will be coming and going, and a thousand things to do before the case is tried. We did not see the Abbé de Grancey for three weeks when the Chapter's suit was going on, he was so busy."

"But that concerned the very existence of the Chapter," said Monsieur de Watteville. "Besides, the self-respect, the conscience of the archbishop, all that the priesthood depend on was at stake. That Savarus has no idea what he did for the Chapter ; he saved it."

"Listen to me," she whispered in his ear ; "if you

get Monsieur Savarus on your side you will be sure to win, won't you? Well, then, let me give you a bit of advice. You cannot get Monsieur Savarus to take the case unless through Monsieur de Grancey. Let us both speak, you and I, to the dear abbé without mamma being present; for I know a way to make him urge Monsieur Savarus to defend us."

"It will be very difficult to keep from telling your mother."

"The Abbé de Grancey will tell her later; but if you'll make up your mind to promise to vote for Monsieur Savarus at the next elections, you will get what you want."

"Go to the polls! Take the oath! I?" cried Monsieur de Watteville.

"Pooh!" she said.

"And what will your mother say?"

"Perhaps she would tell you to go," replied Rosalie, who knew from Albert's letter to Léopold of the abbé's promises.

Four days later the Abbé de Grancey paid a very early visit to Albert Savarus, having notified him the night before that he was coming. The purpose of the old priest was to retain the great lawyer for the Watteville interests, — a step which reveals the tact and cleverness which Rosalie had subterraneously employed.

“What can I do for you, Monsieur l’Abbé?” asked Savarus.

The abbé divulged his purpose with much friendliness, but was coldly listened to by Albert.

“Monsieur l’abbé,” said the latter, “it is impossible for me to take the case of the Watteilles, and I will show you why. My rôle here consists in keeping to the strictest neutrality. I do not wish to be of any color or party at all. I desire to remain an enigma until the day of my election. To take the Watteville case would involve nothing at all in Paris; but here, where everything is talked about and commented on, I should be called a man of your faubourg Saint-Germain.”

“Now, do you suppose,” said the abbé, “that you can keep yourself unknown on the day of the election, when all the candidates attack one another. Everyone will know then that your name is Savaron de Savarus; that you were once Master of petitions, and a man of the Restoration.”

“On the election day,” said Savarus, “I shall be all that I ought to be. I intend to speak at the preparatory meetings.”

“If Monsieur de Watteville and his party support you, you will have a hundred solid votes, surer than those you are counting on; for dissensions can always be sown among self-interests, but you can’t separate those who are held together by convictions.”

“The devil!” cried Savarus. “I love you, and I would like to do all I can for you, Father. Is there any way of compromising with the devil? I might, perhaps, by employing Girardet, and guiding him secretly, make Monsieur de Watteville’s case drag on till after the elections. But I certainly will not take part in it myself till then.”

“Well, do one thing,” said the abbé; “come to hôtel de Rupt; there you’ll find a little girl of nineteen, who will some day have a hundred thousand francs a year in her own right; you can pretend to be paying her attentions.”

“Ah! that young girl I see sometimes in the kiosk?”

“Yes, Mademoiselle Rosalie,” continued the abbé. “You are ambitious; if you please her, you might become all that an ambitious man can make himself, — who knows? minister perhaps. A man can always be a minister when he has a hundred thousand francs a year joined to your astounding capacities.”

“Monsieur l’abbé,” said Albert, quickly; “Mademoiselle de Watteville might have three times that fortune, and even adore me, and it would still be impossible for me to marry her.”

“Are you married?” exclaimed the abbé.

“No, not in church, not before a mayor,” said Savarus, “but morally.”

“That is all the stronger when a man cares for it as much as I see you do,” replied the abbé. “However, all which is not done need not be done. Don’t rest everything, plans and fortune too, on the will of a woman ; a wise man does not wait for the shoes of a dead one to set foot on his way.”

“Let us say no more about Mademoiselle de Watteville,” said Albert, gravely, “but settle what we were speaking of. For your sake, and because I love and respect you, I will take Monsieur de Watteville’s case, but not appear in it till after the elections. Until then Girardet must conduct it according to my advice. That is all I can agree to do.”

“But there are points which cannot be decided on without an inspection of the locality,” said the vicar-general.

“Girardet can go,” said Savarus. “I cannot allow myself to take, under the eyes of this town which I know very well, a step which would compromise the immense stake I have in my election.”

The Abbé de Grancey parted from Savarus with a shrewd look, by which he seemed to laugh at the invulnerable resolution of the young athlete, all the while admiring his firmness.

“Ah!” cried Rosalie, the next day as she stood in the kiosk, and watched Albert in his study, having

heard of the result of the abbé's mission from Monsieur de Watteville, "I have driven my father into a lawsuit, I have moved heaven and earth to bring you here, — yes! I have committed a mortal sin for you, and you will not come to us, and I shall never hear that noble voice. You make conditions, do you, when the Wattevilles and the Rupts make advances? Well, then, God knows I meant to be contented with those little pleasures, — seeing you, listening to you, going to Rouxey with you to feel it blessed by your presence; I did not even wish for more — but now, now I will be your wife! Yes, gaze at *her* portrait, examine those drawings of *her* house, *her* room, the views of *her* villa and *her* gardens. You want her statue! I'll make that woman marble to you! She cannot love. Arts, science, books, music, — they have taken half her mind and half her senses. Besides, she is old, she is over thirty, and my Albert would be wretched with her."

"What are you doing here, Rosalie?" said her mother, coming into the kiosk, and scattering her reflections. "Monsieur de Soulas is in the salon; he took notice of your behavior, which certainly betrays more thought than you ought to have at your age."

"Is Monsieur de Soulas opposed to thinking?" asked Rosalie.

"Then you were thinking?" said Madame de Watteville.

“Yes, mamma.”

“No, you were not. You were gazing at the windows of that lawyer, with an interest that is neither proper nor decent, and which Monsieur de Soulas should be the last to remark.”

“Why?” asked Rosalie.

“Rosalie,” said the baroness, “it is high time you should know our intentions. Amédée likes you, and you will not be badly off as the Comtesse de Soulas.”

Pale as a lily Rosalie made no answer to her mother; the violence of her thwarted feelings made her stupid. But when she came into the presence of the man whom for the last few moments she had begun to hate, her lips took on a smile such as we see on those of opera dancers in a ballet. She was even able to laugh, and had the strength to hide her fury, which subsided as she suddenly resolved to employ that heavy, dull young man to carry out her schemes.

“Monsieur Amédée,” she said, when the baroness walked before them in the garden, affecting to leave the young people to themselves, “did you know that Monsieur Albert Savaron de Savarus is a legitimist?”

“Legitimist?”

“Yes; before 1830 he was Master of petitions to the Council of State, and secretary to the Council of ministers, and was much thought of by the Dauphin and Dauphiness. It would have been better if you had

never said a word against him, and now it will be better still if you will assist in electing him to the Chamber this year, and so prevent that poor Monsieur de Chavoncourt from representing the town of Besançon."

"What a sudden interest you seem to take in that lawyer."

"Monsieur Albert de Savarus, natural son of the Comte de Savarus (oh! pray don't say I told you all this), is to be our lawyer in the affair of Les Rouxey, provided he is elected. My father tells me that Les Rouxey is to be my property, and I mean to live there; it is enchanting. I should be in despair if that magnificent creation of the great Watteville were cut up."

"The deuce!" thought Amédée, as he left the hôtel de Rupt; "the heiress is not such a fool as her mother thinks she is."

Monsieur de Chavoncourt was a royalist who belonged to the famous 221. Accordingly, the day after the revolution of July, 1830, he began to preach the salutary doctrine of taking the oath and making a constitutional opposition to the existing order of things, like the Tories against the Whigs in England. This doctrine was not acceptable to the legitimists, who kept aloof under defeat, trusting to the force of inactivity and the help of Providence. Distrusted politically by his own social class, Monsieur de Chavoncourt seemed to the party of the *juste-milieu* the best choice they

could make ; they preferred the acceptance of his moderate opinions to the triumph of a republican by the votes of enthusiasts and "patriots." Monsieur de Chavoncourt as a man was greatly respected in Besançon ; he came of an old parliamentary family ; his fortune, about fifteen thousand francs a year, excited little envy from the fact that he had a son and three daughters. Fifteen thousand francs a year is a mere nothing with such expenses. When, therefore, the father of a family in such circumstances is known to be incorruptible, how can his fellow-citizens avoid respecting him ? Voters are often enthusiastic over an ideal of parliamentary virtue, just as the gallery applauds an exhibition of generous sentiments which it does not practise.

Madame de Chavoncourt, then about forty years of age, was one of the handsomest women in Besançon. During the sessions of the Chamber she lived in a cheap way on one of their farms in the neighborhood, in order to economize the cost of Monsieur de Chavoncourt's stay in Paris. During the winters she received her friends in a suitable manner once a week on Tuesdays, and she thoroughly understood her vocation as hostess. Young de Chavoncourt, her son, then about twenty-two years old, was extremely intimate with another young man, Monsieur de Vauchelles, who was also a college friend of Amédée de Soulas. They

walked together, hunted together, and were known to be so inseparable that they were usually invited together. Rosalie, who was equally intimate with the Chavoncourt sisters, knew very well that the three young men had no secrets from each other. She reflected that if Monsieur de Soulas betrayed her confidence it would be to these intimate friends. Now, Monsieur de Vauchelles had his own marriage scheme, as Amédée had his; he wanted to marry Victoire, the eldest Chavoncourt sister, on whom an old aunt had settled a domain worth seven thousand francs a year, and a dowry of a hundred thousand francs in money. Victoire was her goddaughter and her favorite niece. It was certain therefore that young de Vauchelles and de Chavoncourt would inform Monsieur de Chavoncourt of the opposition which Albert was about to make to his election.

But this was not enough for Rosalie. She wrote an anonymous letter with her left hand to the Prefect of the department, signing it "A friend to Louis-Philippe," in which she informed him of the secret intentions of Monsieur Albert de Savarus, pointing out to him the dangerous help a royalist orator would give to Berryer, and betraying Albert's whole scheme and conduct in coming to Besançon, as she had read it in his letters. The Prefect, an able man, was personally inimical to the royalist party, and devoted, from con-

viction, to the government of July, — one of those men, in short, who made the minister of the Interior declare, “We have a *good* prefect at Besançon.” The Prefect read the letter, and obeyed the injunction it contained to burn it.

Rosalie’s object was to make Albert lose his election, and keep him five years longer in Besançon.

In those days the elections were a struggle between parties, and in order to gain an advantage the ministry selected both the time and place for the contest. The election was now appointed to take place at the end of three months. When a man has staked his whole life upon the turn of an election, the time which elapses between the ordinance issued and the day fixed is a period during which his ordinary life is at a standstill. Rosalie fully understood the chances that this gave her. She compelled Mariette (whom, as she afterwards admitted, she promised to take into her service with Jérôme) to bring to her all the letters which Albert received, and all those which he sent to Italy. While thus employed in manœuvring these plans this astounding young girl was working at her father’s slippers with an ingenuous air; in fact, she increased the candor and innocence of her manner, being well aware that they served her purpose.

“My daughter is growing really charming,” said Madame de Watteville.

Two months before the elections a meeting took place at the house of Monsieur Boucher, the head of the company of the "Revue de l'Est," at which were present the contractor who hoped for the building of the bridge and the waterworks at Arcier, the father-in-law of Monsieur Boucher, Monsieur Granet, the influential man already mentioned to whom Albert had done a service, and who intended to propose him as a candidate, the lawyer Girardet, the printer of the "Revue," and the president of the Court of commerce. There were present about twenty-seven persons, all, in provincial language, "big-wigs." Each of them represented at least six votes; at first the number was estimated at ten, for persons always begin by exaggerating their own influence. Among these twenty-seven persons was a friend of the Prefect, a man with a secret hope of obtaining something for himself and his family from the administration. At this first meeting it was agreed, with an enthusiasm little to be expected in Besançon, to present the lawyer Savaron as candidate for election.

While waiting in his study until Alfred Boucher should summon him to the meeting Albert received a visit from the Abbé de Grancey, who was deeply interested in his vast ambition. Albert recognized the great political capacity of the priest, and the priest, touched by the young man's entreaty, had served him as guide

and counsellor in the present struggle. The Chapter did not like Monsieur de Chavoncourt, partly for his opinions, and partly because the brother-in-law of his wife was president of the court in which they were defeated in the first trial of their famous case.

“My dear son,” began the shrewd and worthy abbé, in the calm and gentle voice that characterizes an old priest, “you are betrayed.”

“Betrayed!” cried the lover, struck to the heart.

“By whom I do not yet know,” continued the priest, “but the Prefect knows all your plans and sees your game. I can’t give you any advice at this moment. Such matters have to be studied. As to the meeting of this evening, you had better take the bull by the horns and meet the attack which will be made against you shortly. Relate your past life and tell your purpose; in this way you will lessen the effect the discovery will produce in Besançon.”

“Oh, I expected this!” said Savarus, in a changed voice.

“You would not take my advice when I gave you the opportunity to go to the hôtel de Rupt. You don’t know what you might have gained by going there.”

“What should I have gained?”

“The unanimous support of the royalists, — a momentary agreement which would have brought to your election at least a hundred votes. By adding those to

what we call among ourselves the "ecclesiastical vote," though you might not have been nominated, you were certain of election by the ballot."

When Alfred Boucher came in, full of enthusiasm, to announce the decision of the informal meeting, he found the lawyer and the vicar-general cool, calm, and exceedingly grave.

"Adieu, Monsieur l'abbé," said Savarus, "we will talk of your affair as soon as the election is over."

Then he took Boucher's arm, after pressing the abbé's hand significantly. The priest turned and gazed at the ambitious man, whose face at that moment wore the look that a general's must wear when he hears the first cannon of the coming battle. The abbé raised his eyes to heaven as he left the room, saying to himself, "Oh, what a priest he would have made!"

Eloquence does not really belong to the bar. It is seldom that a lawyer displays the true powers of his soul; if he did, he would die of it in a few years. Neither is eloquence found in the pulpit of to-day. There are moments in the Chamber of Deputies when some ambitious man, staking all to win all, and pricked by a thousand arrows, bursts forth eloquently at a given moment. But this is more likely to happen with certain rare souls during the fateful quarter of an hour when success hangs in the balance,

and they are called upon to speak. At this meeting Albert Savarus, feeling the necessity of obtaining adherents, brought every faculty of his soul and all the resources of his mind to bear upon his object.

He entered the room where the meeting was in progress admirably, without either awkwardness or assumption, without timidity or weakness, but with gravity, and found himself in the midst of some thirty or more persons—for a rumor of the meeting and its decision had brought in a few more sheep, docile to their bell-wether. Before listening to Monsieur Boucher, who was about to make him a speech on the resolution of the committee, Albert requested silence by a gesture, at the same time pressing Monsieur Boucher's hand to warn him of some sudden danger.

“My young friend, Alfred Boucher, has just brought me word of the honor which has been done to me. But before this decision becomes definitive,” said Savarus, “I think it my duty to explain to you fully who your candidate is, so as to leave you free to withdraw your promises if my declarations should trouble your consciences.”

This exordium produced an instantaneous silence. Some present thought the action a very noble one.

Albert explained his past life; gave his full name; stated his position under the Restoration, and asserted that he was making himself a new career since

his arrival in Besançon, giving at the same time pledges for the future. His audience hung breathless on his words. These men, actuated by so many diverse interests, were subjugated by the eloquence which came rushing from the heart and soul of the ambitious man. Admiration hindered all reflection. Those present saw but one thing, — the thing that Albert wished them to see.

Was it not better, they said to themselves, that the town should be represented by a man evidently destined to govern, rather than by a mere voting mechanism? A statesman was an actual power; a commonplace deputy, however incorruptible, was only a conscience. What glory Provence had acquired by comprehending the genius of Mirabeau, and by sending to the Chamber since 1830 the only statesman produced by the revolution of July.

Under pressure of Albert's eloquence, all present believed him fitted to become, as their representative, a magnificent political instrument. They saw a future minister in the man. His profession of faith, his avowal of ambition, and the recital of his career were, in the words of one present who afterwards became one of the ablest men in Besançon, "a masterpiece of skill, sentiment, fervor, shrewdness, and seduction." The whirlwind of his eloquence caught up the electors. No man had ever a greater triumph.

But, unfortunately, spoken words, weapons for close range, have only an immediate effect. If a vote could have been taken then, most assuredly Albert's name would have issued from the urn. For the time being he was conqueror. But to succeed he would have to conquer daily for two months. He left the meeting throbbing with hope. Applauded to the echo, he knew he had won the great result of forestalling and killing the gossip to which the rumor of his antecedents would otherwise give rise. The commercial class in Besançon accepted Monsieur Savaron de Savarus as its candidate.

The Prefect, alarmed at this success, began to count up and marshal the ministerial votes. He sought and obtained a secret interview with Monsieur de Chavoncourt, with the object of a coalition for their mutual interests. Every day (though Albert was unable to discover how and why it was) the support of the Boucher committee dwindled. One month before the elections he found he could hardly count on sixty votes. The quiet underhand work of the Prefecture was irresistible. Three or four clever men suggested to clients who had employed Savarus, "If he is made deputy he cannot attend to your affairs. How can he give you advice, or draw your deeds and your conveyances? You could have his services five years more if, instead of sending him to the Chamber now,

you held out hopes of it at the following elections." This argument was all the more injurious to Savarus because the wives of several of his clients took it up. The contractor and others interested in the bridges and waterworks at Arcier were made to see, in a conference with a clever emissary, that the promotion of their interests really lay with the Prefecture, and not with an ambitious deputy.

Every day brought some new defeat; though every day he waged his battle, — a battle directed by himself but fought by his lieutenants; a battle of words, speeches, measures. He dared not go to the vicar-general, and the vicar-general no longer came to him. Albert rose in the mornings and went to bed at night with fever in his pulses and his brain on fire.

At last the day came for the first struggle, — that of the preparatory meeting, as it is called, where preliminary votes are given, where the candidates can judge of their chances, and wise heads foresee either failure or success. It is a scene like the English "hustings," and, except that it is decent and without the mob, as terrible. The emotions felt have no physical expression, as in England, but they are none the less intense. The English manage the matter with fists, the French with phrases. Our neighbors fight a battle; we play our game with cool manœuvres calmly elaborated. This political act is performed by each of the two nations in a manner the exact reverse of their two natures.

The radical candidate appeared; Monsieur de Chavoncourt presented himself; then Albert, who was at once accused by the radicals and the Chavoncourt committee of being a legitimist unreconciled. — another Berryer. The administration also had its candidate. Thus divided, the votes of course gave no result. The republican candidate had twenty, the ministry fifty, Albert seventy, and Monsieur de Chavoncourt sixty-eight. But for this preliminary count the treacherous Prefecture had thrown some thirty of its votes for Albert for the purpose of misleading its adversaries; its real force was over eighty votes, and if those cast for Monsieur de Chavoncourt, together with those of a few radicals, could be diverted it was master of the situation. One hundred and forty votes were still to be heard from, — those of Monsieur de Grancey and the legitimists. A preparatory meeting is to the real election what a rehearsal is to a play, — the most misleading thing in the world.

Albert Savarus returned home, holding his head high, but dying at heart. Two men who were devoted to him but who were voting in the enemies' camp had contrived to let him know towards the end of the meeting that thirty of the votes deposited for him were a blind. A criminal marching to execution never suffered more than Albert as he walked home that night from the house where his fate was staked. The

unhappy man would let no one accompany him. He walked alone through the streets between eleven o'clock and midnight.

At one in the morning Savarus, who had not slept for three nights, was still sitting in his library, pale as death, his hands and arms pendent, in an attitude of utter abandonment that might have served for the Magdalen. Tears were beneath his long eyelashes, — those tears that wet the eyes but do not fall, for thought drinks them, the fire of the soul dries their moisture. In solitude he could weep. He saw through the window a white form hovering in the kiosk which recalled to him Francesca.

“It is now three months since She has written to me! What has become of her? Is she ill? Oh, my love, my life! will you ever know all that I have suffered? What a fatal organization is mine! Have I an aneurism?” he asked, feeling his heart beat so violently that its pulsations echoed in the utter silence like atoms of sand falling upon iron.

At that instant three distinct raps were given upon Albert's door. He opened it instantly, and came near fainting when he saw the face of the vicar-general, beaming with joy and an air of triumph. He caught the abbé in his arms without a word, pressed him tightly, and let his head fall on the shoulder of the old man, weeping as he had wept on the night he first

knew that Francesca was married. To the priest alone could he show his weakness.

“Forgive me, dear abbé,” he said, “but you have come at one of those supreme moments in life when our manhood vanishes, — for you must not think me a man of mere vulgar ambitions.”

“I know, I know!” said the abbé. “You wrote that story of ‘Ambition through Love’! Ah, my son, despair in love made me a priest in 1786, when I was twenty-two years old. In 1788 I was a curate. I know life. I have refused three bishoprics; I wish to die in Besançon.”

“Come and see Her,” cried Savarus, taking a candle and leading the abbé into his study, where was the portrait of the Duchesse d’Argaiolo, which he lighted up.

“She is one of the women who are made to reign,” said the vicar, comprehending the true affection which Albert proved to him by this mute confidence. “But there is pride on that brow, implacable pride; she would never forgive an injury. It is the archangel Michael, the avenging angel, the inflexible angel. All or nothing! that is the motto of those angelic characters. There is something, I know not what, divinely untamable in that head.”

“Ah, you have divined her!” cried Savarus. “For twelve years, dear abbé, she has ruled my life and I have never had one thought unfaithful to her — ”

“ Would that you had done as much for God ! ” exclaimed the abbé, naïvely. “ But now let us talk of your affairs. For the last ten days I have been working for you. If you are a true politician you will take my advice this time. You would not be where you are now if you had gone to the hôtel de Rupt as I told you to do. But you must go there to-morrow evening ; I will present you. The estate of Rouxey is in danger, and you must argue the case within the next two days, and the election does not take place till the third day. Care will be taken, however, not to come to any result on that day. There will be several ballots, and you will get your election through balloting.”

“ But how ? ”

“ If you win the Rouxey suit you are sure of eighty legitimist votes ; add those to the thirty I hold, that makes a hundred and ten ; with twenty the Boucher committee still have, you can count on one hundred and thirty votes.”

“ Yes,” said Albert ; “ but I need sixty-five more.”

“ I know that ; and all the rest belong at present to the administration. But you can really have two hundred votes if you choose, while the prefecture will have only one hundred and eighty.”

“ How can I have two hundred votes ? ” said Albert, who had sprung to his feet as if moved by springs, and now stood rigid with astonishment.

"You will have the votes of Monsieur de Chavoncourt," replied the abbé.

"How?"

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt."

"Never."

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt," repeated the abbé, coldly.

"Look! you said yourself she was implacable," said Albert, pointing to the portrait of Francesca.

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt," said the priest, coldly, for the third time.

This time Albert understood him. He saw that the vicar-general would not personally meddle in a matter which would lift him out of his despair. A word more would have compromised his dignity as a priest.

"To-morrow evening you will meet Madame de Chavoncourt at the hôtel de Rupt, and you will thank her for all she proposes to do for you. You can tell her your gratitude is boundless, and that you belong body and soul to her and to her family. You will have a passage at arms with Madame de Chavoncourt, who will want to obtain some promise from you. Your future lies in to-morrow evening, my son. But remember, I have had nothing to do with all this. I am responsible only for the legitimist votes; I have won Madame de Watteville for you, and with her all the aristocracy

of Besançon. Amédée de Soulas and de Vauchelles, who will vote for you, lead the young men, and Madame de Watteville the old ones. As to the votes I control they are infallible."

"Who has influenced Madame de Chavoncourt?" said Savarus.

"Ask no questions," replied the abbé. "Monsieur de Chavoncourt, who has three daughters to marry, cannot increase his fortune. If Vauchelles marries the eldest without dowry from him (her aunt having provided for her), what is he to do with the other two? Some one has suggested to Madame de Chavoncourt that she had better marry one of them, rather than let her husband go to Paris and spend money. Some one leads Madame de Chavoncourt, and Madame de Chavoncourt leads her husband."

"That's enough, my dear abbé; I understand. If I am made a deputy, I must make somebody's fortune, and that will release me of all obligation. In me you will have a son, — a man who will owe his happiness to you. Good heavens! what have I done to deserve such kindness?"

"You saved the Chapter," said the abbé, smiling. "Keep all this as secret as the grave. We priests have nothing to do with it. If it were known that we meddled in the elections, those puritans of the Left would eat us alive, and we should be blamed by those

our own party who want the management in their hands. Madame de Chavoncourt knows nothing of my part in all this. I have trusted no one but lame de Watteville, who can be counted on like of ourselves."

I shall bring the duchess here that you may bless union," cried Savarus.

After showing the abbé to the door Albert went to bed and to sleep, wrapped in dreams of power.

V.

AT nine o'clock the next evening the salons of Madame la Baronne de Watteville were, as may readily be imagined, full to overflowing with the Besancian aristocracy; specially invited for the occasion. Every one was discussing the *exception* they proposed to make in taking part in the election. It was known that a former Master of petitions, the late secretary of one of the most faithful ministers of the Eldest Branch, was to be introduced. Madame de Chavoncourt was there, with her second daughter, Sidonie, charmingly dressed, while the eldest, sure of her marriage, had recourse to no special toilet artifices. Such little matters are noticed in the provinces. The Abbé de Grancey, with his fine, shrewd head, moved about from group to group, listening to all but mingling with none, and saying every now and then those incisive words which sum up questions or suggest them.

“If the Eldest Branch were to return,” he remarked to a septuagenarian politician, “what sort of statesmanship would it find now? Berryer, alone upon his bench, can do nothing; but give him sixty votes, and

he could trip up the government on many occasions, and overthrow their administrations."

"The Duc de Fitz-james is to be elected at Tournai — "

"If you vote for Monsieur de Savarus, the republicans will join you rather than vote with the *juste-milieu*," etc.

At nine o'clock Albert had not arrived. Madame de Watteville was inclined to regard the delay as an impertinence on his part.

"Oh, no, madame," said Madame de Chavoncourt: "we must not allow such really serious matters to be affected by a trifle, — a varnished boot not quite dry, a legal consultation at the last moment, may detain him."

Rosalie looked askance at Madame de Chavoncourt.

"She is very considerate of Monsieur de Savarus," he whispered to her mother.

"Oh," replied Madame de Watteville, smiling, "there is some talk of a marriage between Sidonie and Monsieur de Savarus."

Mademoiselle de Watteville turned and went hastily to a window overlooking the garden.

At ten o'clock Albert de Savarus had not appeared. The muttering storm now burst. Some of the guests went to the card-tables, finding the delay intolerable. The Abbé de Grancey, who knew not what to think,

walked to the window where Rosalie was hidden, and said aloud, so bewildered was he, "He must be dead." Then he opened the window and stepped into the garden, followed by Monsieur de Watteville and his daughter. All three went to the kiosk. Albert's rooms were closed and no lights visible.

"Jérôme!" cried Rosalie, seeing the servant in the courtyard. The abbé looked at her with amazement. "Where is your master?" she asked when Jérôme came to the foot of the wall.

"Gone — in a post-chaise, mademoiselle."

"Lost!" exclaimed the abbé de Grancey, — "or happy!"

The light of triumph on Rosalie's face was not so quickly hidden but that the vicar-general saw it, though he feigned to see nothing. .

"What has that young girl had to do with all this?" thought the priest.

All three returned to the salon, where Monsieur de Watteville announced the strange and startling news of the departure of Monsieur de Savarus in a post-chaise, apparently without giving any reasons for his disappearance. By half-past eleven only a dozen persons were left in the salon, among them Madame de Chavoncourt and her two daughters, Monsieur de Vauchelles, the Abbé de Grancey and the Abbé de Gode-nars, another vicar-general, who was seeking to be a

bishop. and Amédée de Soulas. The Abbé de Grancey placed himself by Madame de Watteville in a position which enabled him to keep his eye on Rosalie, whose face, usually so pale, was now flushed with fever.

“What can have happened to Monsieur de Savarus?” Madame de Chavoncourt was saying.

Just then a servant in livery handed a note on a silver tray to the Abbé de Grancey.

“Read your letter,” said the baroness.

The vicar-general read it, noticing that Rosalie turned as white as her handkerchief.

“She knows the writing,” thought the abbé after glancing at the girl above his spectacles. He folded the letter and put it quietly into his pocket without a word. In three minutes he received three looks from Rosalie which enabled him to guess all.

“She loves Albert Savarus!” thought he.

The abbé rose, took leave, and went towards the door. In the second salon Rosalie joined him.

“It was from *Albert*,” she said.

“How do you know his writing well enough to distinguish it at that distance?”

The young girl, thus caught in the meshes of her own impatient anger, said a thing which the abbé thought sublime.

“Because I love him! — What has happened?” she added after a pause.

“He renounces his election,” replied the abbé.

Rosalie laid a finger on her lips.

“I ask you to grant me the secrecy of the confessional on all this,” she said before she left him to return to the salon. “If there is no election there’ll be no marriage with Sidonie,” she thought, as she walked back.

The next morning on her way to mass Mademoiselle de Watteville heard from Mariette some of the circumstances which led to Albert’s departure at the most critical moment of his life.

“Mademoiselle,” said Mariette, “an old gentleman arrived from Paris yesterday at the Hôtel National in his own carriage, a fine carriage with four horses, an outrider and a valet. Jérôme, who saw him when he drove away, says he must be a prince or a milord.”

“Did the carriage have a ducal coronet?” asked Rosalie.

“I don’t know,” said Mariette. “It was about two o’clock when he came to the house and sent up his card to Monsieur Savarus. When Monsieur saw it Jérôme says he turned as white as a sheet, and told him to show the gentleman up. As Monsieur locked the door after him it was impossible to hear what was said. They were together nearly an hour; then the old gentleman, accompanied by Monsieur, came out and called for his own servant. Jérôme saw this man bring down an

immense package four feet long which looked like a picture, and put it in the carriage. The old gentleman followed with a large bundle of papers in his hand. Monsieur Savarus, as pale as if he was going to die, — he so proud, so dignified! — was in a pitiable state. But he was very respectful to the old gentleman; he could n't have been more so to the king. Jérôme and Monsieur Albert stood at the door of the carriage, which was already harnessed with the four horses, and was driven away just at three o'clock. Then Monsieur went straight to the Prefecture, and from there to Monsieur Gentillet, who sold him the travelling-carriage of the late Madame de Vier; after which he ordered post-horses to be ready at six. Then he came home and packed up some things, and wrote some notes, and sent for Monsieur Girardet, who came and stayed with him till seven o'clock. Jérôme took a note to Monsieur Boucher, where Monsieur Savarus was engaged to dine. Then about half-past seven Monsieur went away, paying Jérôme three months' wages, and telling him to find another place. He left his keys with Monsieur Girardet, with whom, Jérôme says, he went home and got some soup; and after that he got into the carriage more dead than alive, and Jérôme heard him tell the postilion to take the Geneva road."

"Did Jérôme ask the name of the old gentleman at the Hôtel National?"

“Yes, but as he only stopped there an hour or two they had not taken his name. The servants, under orders I dare say, pretended not to speak French.”

“Who brought the letter to the Abbé de Grancey which came so late?”

“Probably Monsieur Savarus gave it to Monsieur Girardet to deliver; but Jérôme says that poor Monsieur Girardet, who loved Monsieur Savarus, was nearly as much upset as he was. He who comes in mystery goes in mystery, as Mademoiselle Galard says.”

After hearing this account of Albert's departure Mademoiselle de Watteville became so absorbed in her own thoughts that everybody noticed it. It is useless to dwell on the excitement caused in Besançon by the disappearance of the lawyer. It was known that the Prefect had hastened with the utmost courtesy to fill out his passport for foreign parts, which relieved the administration of its only adversary. The next day Monsieur de Chavoncourt was nominated by a majority of a hundred and forty votes.

This strange event strengthened the prejudice felt in Besançon against all strangers. At the end of ten days not a word more was said of Albert Savarus. Three persons only, the lawyer Girardet, the vicar-general, and Rosalie, were seriously affected by his disappearance. Girardet knew that the white-haired old gentleman was the Prince Soderini, for he had seen his card,

and he told this to the vicar-general. But Rosalie, who was far better informed, had known for the last three months of the death of the Duc d'Argaiolo.

At the end of the month of April, 1836, nine months after the above events, no one had heard anything of Albert Savarus. Jérôme and Mariette were thinking of being married, but the baroness told her maid, confidentially, to wait awhile, as the marriage of her daughter would soon take place, and the weddings could be celebrated together.

"It is time to marry Rosalie," she said to Monsieur de Watteville. "She is nearly twenty, and for the last few months she has changed dreadfully."

"I am sure I don't know what is the matter with her," said the baron.

"If fathers don't know what is the matter with their daughters, mothers do," replied the baroness; "she must be married."

"I am willing," said the baron, "and for my share I'll give her Les Rouxey, — now that the court has settled the matter with the township of Riceys. The Riceys people have n't appealed, so the case is ended."

"You seemed never to have guessed," said the baroness, "that the decision not to appeal cost me thirty thousand francs, which I paid to Chantonnet, the mayor. Money was all that peasant wanted, and he

simply sold us peace. If you give away Les Rouxey, you won't have a penny of your own left."

"I don't need much," said the baron. "I sha'n't live long."

"You eat like an ogre."

"Exactly, but the more I eat the weaker my legs get."

"Because you will use that turning-machine."

"I don't know about that," said the baron.

"Well, we must marry Rosalie to Monsieur de Soulas; if you do give her Les Rouxey at least reserve the right to live there. For my part, I will give her fifteen thousand francs a year from the Funds. They can live with us, and I don't think they'll be unhappy."

"No, I shall give them Les Rouxey outright; Rosalie is fond of Les Rouxey."

"You are very singular in your regard for your daughter. You never ask me if I like Les Rouxey!"

Rosalie was called, and informed that she was to marry Monsieur Amédée de Soulas at the beginning of May.

"I thank you, mamma, and you, papa, for having thought of my establishment," she said; "but I don't wish to marry; I am very happy as I am, here with you."

"Girlish nonsense!" said the baroness; "you are not in love with Monsieur de Soulas, that's all."

“If you wish to know the truth, I will never marry Monsieur de Soulas.”

“Pooh! the ‘never’ of a girl of twenty!” said Madame de Watteville, with a sour smile.

“The ‘never’ of a de Watteville,” said Rosalie in a significant tone. “My father does not intend, I presume, to marry me without my consent.”

“Oh, heavens, no!” said the poor baron, looking tenderly at his daughter.

“Very good,” said the baroness, controlling her wrath at being suddenly and unexpectedly braved; “you may take upon yourself, Monsieur de Watteville, the duty of establishing your daughter. But remember, mademoiselle, if you marry against my wishes you will get nothing from me for your establishment.”

The quarrel thus begun between Madame de Watteville and the baron, who stood by his daughter, went to such lengths that Rosalie and her father were finally obliged to live the whole summer at Les Rouxey, the hôtel de Rupt being made intolerable to them. It thus became known in Besançon that Mademoiselle de Watteville had positively refused to marry Monsieur le Comte de Soulas.

After Jérôme and Mariette were married they went to live at Les Rouxey, under promise from Rosalie that they should one day succeed Modinier. The baron repaired and restored the Hermitage according to his

daughter's taste. When Madame de Watteville discovered that the cost of these improvements was over sixty thousand francs, and that Rosalie and her father were building greenhouses out of her money, she perceived the leaven of malice in her daughter's mind. Besides this, the baron bought several additional bits of land and a small domain, for all of which he paid about thirty thousand francs. It was told to Madame de Watteville that Rosalie, away from her control, showed all the signs of a strong-minded girl; she studied the means of making Les Rouxey profitable; she rode on horseback about the place; and her father, whom she made both comfortable and happy, complained no longer of his health, grew fat, and accompanied his daughter on all her excursions.

On the occasion of Madame de Watteville's fête-day the vicar-general drove out to Les Rouxey, sent no doubt by the baroness and Monsieur de Soulas to negotiate a peace between the mother and daughter.

"That little Rosalie has brains, after all," they said in Besançon.

The baroness, who was determined not to put herself in the wrong, had paid the eighty thousand francs which her husband and Rosalie had spent on Les Rouxey, and she had also sent her husband a thousand francs a month for their expenses of living. The father and daughter were very willing to go to Besan-

son for the fête-day, and to remain there till the end of the month. When the vicar-general after dinner drew Mademoiselle de Watteville apart to open the question of marriage, and make her understand, once for all, that she must not any longer think of Albert, of whom no news had been obtained for over a year, Rosalie stopped him short by a gesture. The strange girl took the old abbé by the arm and led him to a bench beneath a clump of rhododendrons, which overlooked the lake.

“Listen, dear abbé, you whom I love as much as I love my own father, for you have shown a true affection for my Albert. The time has come for me to tell you that I have committed crimes in order to be his wife, and that he must be my husband. Read this.”

She drew a newspaper from the pocket of her apron, which she gave to the abbé, pointing to an article under the heading, “Florence, May 25th,” which read as follows:—

“The marriage of Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré, eldest son of Monsieur le Duc de Chaulieu, to Madame la Duchesse d’Argaiolo, *née* Princesse Soderini, was celebrated yesterday with great splendor. Numerous fêtes, given in honor of this marriage, will enliven Florence during the coming weeks. The fortune of Madame d’Argaiolo is one of the largest in Italy, the late duke having left her his entire property.”

"The woman he loved is married," cried Rosalie.
"I separated them."

"You!" exclaimed the abbé, "How did you do it?"

Rosalie was about to reply when the splash of a fall into the water, and a cry from the gardeners interrupted her words. She rose and ran forward, crying out, "Oh, father!" for she saw him nowhere.

In trying to reach a piece of granite, on which he may have seen the print of a shell, for he was studying certain fossil remains, Monsieur de Watteville had gone too near the edge of the bank and lost his balance, falling into the lake at its deepest part, which was just at the foot of the cliff. The gardeners had much difficulty in recovering him from the mud and slime into which he had plunged and was then struggling. As the baron had dined heavily the shock of the fall interrupted his digestion. When he was undressed, cleaned, and put to bed his condition was so evidently serious that two servants were despatched on horseback, one to Besançon for his wife, the other to the nearest physician and surgeon. When Madame de Watteville arrived, eight hours later, with the principal physician of Besançon, Monsieur de Watteville's condition was already hopeless, in spite of the intelligent care of the Rouxey doctor. The shock had produced a serious infiltration of the brain, and the checked digestion assisted in killing the unlucky baron.

This death, which would certainly not have taken place, said Madame de Watteville, if her husband had remained in Besançon, was attributed by her to her daughter's obstinacy; and she now showed a marked aversion to Rosalie, giving way to a grief that was evidently exaggerated, and calling the baron her "dear lamb." The last of the Wattevilles was buried on an islet in the lake, where the baroness erected a gothic monument in white marble, like that said to be for Héloïse in Père-Lachaise.

A month after this event the baroness and her daughter were living in the hôtel de Rupt, in savage silence. Rosalie was a prey to deep distress, which could seek no comfort from without. She reproached herself bitterly for her father's death, and feared another and even greater misfortune, which was certainly her work and hers only. No one, neither the lawyer Girardet nor the Abbé de Grancey, had obtained the slightest clue to Albert's fate. This utter silence terrified her. At last, in a paroxysm of repentance, she felt the need of confessing to the vicar-general the shocking manœuvres by which she had separated Francesca and Albert.

They were very simple, and yet powerful. Rosalie had suppressed all Albert's letters to the duchess; also the letter in which Francesca told her friend that the duke was ill, and informed him that she

could not write again during the time she was engaged in nursing the dying man. Thus, while Albert was occupied in preparing for the election, the duchess had written to him only twice, once to announce the duke's illness, and next to tell him she was a widow, — two noble and sublime letters, which Rosalie had kept. After practising for many nights the girl had succeeded in imitating Albert's handwriting. She suppressed the real letters of the faithful lover and substituted three others, the rough copies of which made the old priest shudder when he read them, so horribly did the genius of Evil appear there in all its perfection. In the first, Rosalie, writing in Albert's name, prepared the duchess for a change in his feelings; and in the last, she replied to the announcement of the duke's death by an intimation of Albert's approaching marriage with Mademoiselle de Watteville. The infernal cleverness with which the letters were written so amazed the vicar-general that he read them twice over. In reply to the last, Francesca, wounded to the heart by the girl who had vowed to kill her rival's love, wrote the simple words, "You are free; farewell."

"The most infamous crimes and the most odious are those which human justice can never reach," said the abbé, sternly. "But God often punishes them in this world; in that lies the meaning of the awful misfortunes which we think inexplicable. Of all the secret

crimes buried in the mysteries of private life, one of the vilest and most dishonoring is that of opening a letter or reading it surreptitiously. Whoever is guilty of that act, no matter who it is nor what reason may have led to the act, has stained his or her character irretrievably. Are you able to feel the truth in that most touching, most divine story of the young page, falsely accused, who carried the letter containing the order for his own death, and made the journey without one hesitating thought, and whom Providence protected and saved—saved miraculously, as we choose to say? Do you know in what that miracle consisted? Virtue has an ægis as powerful as that of innocent childhood. I tell you these things not to admonish you,” said the old priest, with deep sadness. “I am not here as your confessor; you are not kneeling at the feet of God. I am a friend, terrified at the prospect of your coming punishment. Alas! what has become of your victim, that poor Albert? Can he have killed himself? There was untold violence beneath that calm exterior. I see now that the father of the Duchesse d’Argaiolo, the old Prince Soderini, must have come to demand the letters and portrait of his daughter. That was the thunderbolt which fell on Albert’s head,—he must of course have sought to justify himself, and for that he left Besançon. But why, in fourteen months, have we heard nothing of him?”

“If I marry him he shall be so happy —”

“Happy? he does not love you. You have nothing to give him. Your mother has the deepest aversion to you ever since you made her that savage answer which stabbed her, and will prove your worldly ruin; I mean what you said to her yesterday when she told you that obedience would still repair your wrong-doing, and urged you to marry Amédée. Did you or did you not reply, ‘If you love him so much marry him yourself’? Answer, yes or no?”

“Yes,” said Rosalie.

“I know her well,” said the abbé; “in three months she will be Comtesse de Soulas; she will certainly have children, she will give half her income to her husband, and will reduce your share in the property as much as possible. You will be poor all her life, and she is only thirty-eight years old. All you will have is the estate of Les Rouxey, even supposing your mother agrees to relinquish her rights in it. From the point of view of material interests alone you have mismanaged your life; under that of feeling and sentiment you have ruined it. Instead of coming to your mother —”

Rosalie made a savage motion of her head.

“— to your mother,” continued the priest, “and to your religion, which, at the first ill-regulated impulses of your heart, could have enlightened, advised, and

guided you, you chose to follow your own will, ignorant as you were of life, and heeding nothing but your passion."

These words terrified Mademoiselle de Watteville.

"What must I do?" she said.

"To repair your faults, we must first know the extent of the evil you have done," replied the abbé.

"I will write to the only man who is likely to have any information about Albert, —Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, a notary in Paris, who has been his life-long friend."

"Write nothing unless to tell the truth," said the vicar-general. "Give me the real letters and the false ones, make your confession to me in detail as you would to the director of your conscience, asking me for the means of expiating your sin, and relying upon me. I will see what can be done—for, above all things, you must make plain the innocence of that unhappy man to the eyes of her whom he made his god on earth. He has lost his happiness, but he must have his vindication."

Rosalie promised the vicar-general to obey him, hoping that the steps he took would have the result of bringing Albert back to her.

Not long after the confession of Mademoiselle de Watteville a clerk of Monsieur Léopold Hannequin came to Besançon furnished with a general power of

attorney from Albert Savarus. He went, in the first instance, to Monsieur Girardet and requested him to take steps to sell the house which the lawyer had bought for his election. The clerk sold the furniture of the apartment, and with the proceeds paid Monsieur Girardet five thousand francs which he had advanced to Monsieur Savarus on the evening of his inexplicable departure. When Girardet inquired what had become of the brave and noble man in whom he had felt such interest, the clerk replied that no one knew except Monsieur Hannequin, who was deeply distressed by news contained in the last letter he had received from Monsieur de Savarus.

Learning all this, the vicar-general wrote to Monsieur Hannequin, and received the following reply :

“ PARIS, October, 1836.

“ TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE GRANCEY,
Vicar-general of the Diocese of Besançon :

“ Alas ! monsieur, it is beyond the power of any one to bring Albert back to the life of this world ; he has renounced it. He is now a novice at La Grande-Chartreuse, near Grenoble. You know, better than I who have just learned it, that all things earthly die on the threshold of that cloister. Foreseeing my visit, Albert had requested the Reverend Father-general to prevent my communicating with him. I know enough of that noble heart to be certain that he is the victim

of some odious plot to me unknown. But, however that may be, the end is irrevocable. Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo, now Duchesse de Rhétoré, seems to me to have pushed her cruelty to extremes. When Albert rushed to Belgirate from Besançon she was no longer there, and had left orders which led him to suppose (falsely) that she had gone to London. From London he returned to Italy, and searched for her in many places, — Rome, Naples, Florence. When at last he was able to meet her face to face, it was in Florence at the moment when her marriage was being celebrated. He fainted in the church, and has never been able, even when he lay for a time at death's door, to obtain any explanation from the duchess, who must have had some unknown cause of rancor in her heart.

“For seven months he travelled from place to place on the traces of a cruel woman who made it her pleasure to evade him. He knew neither where nor how to reach her. I saw our poor friend as he passed through Paris after the catastrophe, and if you had seen him as I did, you would have felt with me that no word could be said to him about the duchess without bringing on a crisis in which his reason might give way. If he had known the crime imputed to him he might possibly have found means of justification; but ignorant as he was, what could he do?

Albert is dead — dead to the world. He craved for rest; let us hope that prayer and the deep silence into which he has flung himself may bring him happiness under another form. If you have really known him, monsieur, you will surely pity him, and also pity me his friend.

“Accept, etc., etc.”

As soon as Monsieur de Grancey had read this letter he wrote to the Father-general of the Chartreux, and received with his reply the following letter from Albert Savarus : —

“LA GRANDE CHARTREUSE, November, 1836.

“I recognize your tender soul, my dear, beloved vicar-general, and your ever-youthful heart in all that the Reverend Father-general of our Order has communicated to me. You have indeed understood the only wish that remained in the inmost folds of my heart about the things of this world, — namely, to bring her who has so ill-treated me to do me justice. But in leaving me free to accept your offer of vindication, the Father-general was testing the strength of my vocation. He has had the extreme goodness to tell me this after I had decided to refuse your offer and to maintain an absolute silence as to my conduct. Had I yielded to the temptation of vindicating the man of the world, the seeker for religion would have been rejected by this monastery.

“Is not this enough to show you that I can never

take part in life again? Consequently, the forgiveness which you ask of me for the author of so much woe is fully given, and without one thought of bitterness. I will pray God to pardon that young lady as I pardon her, just as I pray Him to grant a happy life to Madame de Rhétoré. Ah! what matters it whether it be death, or the wilful hand of a young girl frantic to be loved, or the blow of what men call chance -- must we not obey God? There are souls which sorrow changes into a vast desert where the Divine voice echoes. Too late have I come to understand the relation between this life and the life before us -- my strength is gone. I could not serve in the ranks of the Church militant, and I cast the remnants of my earthly existence, which is well-nigh over, at the foot of the altar. This is the last letter that I shall write. You alone -- you who love me and whom I truly love -- could have made me break the rule of forgetting all which I imposed upon my soul when I entered the metropolis of Saint-Bruno; but your name is ever in the prayers of

“ALBERT.”

“Perhaps it is all for the best,” thought the old man.

After communicating this letter to Rosalie, who kissed the passage containing her pardon, the abbé said to her; “Now that he is utterly lost to you, will

you not consent to be reconciled to your mother, and marry the Comte de Soulas?"

"Albert must order me to do so," she replied.

"You see for yourself it is impossible to consult him. Besides, the Father-general would not allow it."

"Could I go and see him?"

"No one can see a Chartreux monk; neither can any woman, except the Queen of France, enter La Grande Chartreuse," said the abbé. "Nothing therefore hinders you from marrying the Comte de Soulas."

"I do not wish to cause my mother's unhappiness," said Rosalie.

"Satan!" cried the vicar-general.

Towards the end of the winter the kind old abbé died, and his friendly offices no longer interposed between the iron natures of Madame de Watteville and her daughter. The event he had predicted took place; the baroness married Monsieur de Soulas in August, 1837, in Paris where she had gone to live by Rosalie's advice, who became very kind to her mother about this time. Madame de Watteville was misled into thinking it was real kindness on her daughter's part, but it was prompted solely by a desire to go to Paris and wreak an atrocious vengeance; Rosalie was determined to avenge Albert by torturing her rival.

Mademoiselle de Watteville was now of age, and

her mother, in order to settle their accounts, had relinquished her rights in Les Rouxey, and the daughter had given the mother a release of all other claims on her father's property. She had also encouraged her mother in marrying the Comte de Soulas and making a settlement upon him.

"Let us each have our liberty," she said.

Madame de Soulas, though somewhat uneasy as to her daughter's intentions, was touched by this apparent generosity, and she made Rosalie a present of six thousand francs a year from the Public Funds, to relieve her conscience. As Madame de Soulas had an immense property in land, and was quite incapable of selling it in order to deprive Rosalie of her legal share, Mademoiselle de Watteville was still an heiress, and she soon took, with her mother, the tone and habits of Paris, where they lived in the great world.

Towards the end of the month of February, 1838, Rosalie, to whom a number of young men were paying assiduous court, was at length able to execute the purpose which had brought her to Paris. Her desire to meet the Duchesse de Rhétoré, to see that remarkable woman and drive her to eternal remorse was gratified. She had taken pains to make herself elegant and coquettish in all her surroundings in order to approach the duchess on a footing of equality. Their first meeting took place at a ball given annually, since 1830, in

aid of the pensioners of the former Civil list. A young man, instigated by Rosalie, pointed her out to the duchess with the remark: "There is a remarkable young girl — very strong-minded. She caused a man of great talent, Monsieur Albert de Savarus, to bury himself in the Chartreuse monastery at Grenoble. She is Mademoiselle de Watteville, an heiress from Besançon."

The duchess turned pale. A look was exchanged between herself and Rosalie, — one of those looks which, from woman to woman, are more deadly than the pistol-shots of a duel. Francesca Soderini, who had suspected Albert's innocence, left the ballroom at once, her informant being little aware of the terrible wound he had inflicted on the stately Duchesse de Rhétoré.

"If you wish to know more about Albert come to the ball at the Opera-house on Tuesday next, holding a marigold in your hand."

This anonymous letter, sent by Rosalie to the duchess, brought the unfortunate Francesca to the ball, where Mademoiselle de Watteville placed in her hands all Albert's letters, the one written by Léopold Hannequin to the vicar-general, and even the one in which she had written her own confession to the abbé.

"I will not be the only one to suffer," she said to her rival; "you have been as cruel to him as I."

After enjoying for an instant the stupefaction visible on the beautiful face of the duchess, Rosalie left the room and never again reappeared in society. She returned to Besançon with her mother.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, living alone on her estate of Les Rouxey, riding on horseback, hunting, refusing two or three suitors a year, and going occasionally to Besançon, being at one time chiefly occupied in making her property productive, was considered an extremely original person, and one of the celebrities of the East.

Madame de Soulas has two children, a boy and a girl; she has grown younger, but young Monsieur de Soulas is considerably older.

"My fortune has cost me dear," he said to his friend de Chavoncourt. "If you want to know what a *dévoté* is you must marry her."

Mademoiselle de Watteville does extraordinary things. People say of her, "She is a trifle cracked." She goes, or rather did go, every year to look at the walls of La Grande Chartreuse. Perhaps she was thinking of imitating her great uncle and scaling the walls of that convent as he scaled those of his monastery when he escaped into freedom.

In 1841 she left Besançon with the intention, people said, of being married; but no one really knows the object of her journey, from which she was brought

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back in a state which prevented her, forever after, from appearing in society. By one of those apparent chances to which the old Abbé de Grancey had alluded, she was on the Loire in a steamboat when the boiler burst. Mademoiselle de Watteville was so cruelly injured that she lost her right arm and her left leg ; her face was so scarred that no trace of comeliness remained, and her health so broken by the shock that she seldom passes a day without suffering. Since then, she has never left the Hermitage at Les Rouzey, where she leads a life which is wholly devoted to her religious duties.

P A Z.

(LA FAUSSE MAÎTRESSE.)

P A Z.

DEDICATED TO THE COMTESSE CLARA MAFFEI.

I.

IN September, 1835, one of the richest heiresses of the faubourg Saint-Germain, Mademoiselle du Rouvre, the only daughter of the Marquis du Rouvre, married Comte Adam Mitgislav Laginski, a young Polish exile.

We ask permission to write these Polish names as they are pronounced, to spare our readers the aspect of the fortifications of consonants by which the Slave language protects its vowels, — probably not to lose them, considering how few there are.

The Marquis du Rouvre had squandered nearly the whole of a princely fortune, which he obtained originally through his marriage with a Demoiselle de Ronquerolles. Therefore, on her mother's side Clementine du Rouvre had the Marquis de Ronquerolles for uncle, and Madame de Sérizy for aunt. On her father's side she had another

uncle in the eccentric person of the Chevalier du Rouvre, a younger son of the house, an old bachelor who had become very rich by speculating in lands and houses. The Marquis de Ronquerolles had the misfortune to lose both his children at the time of the cholera, and the only son of Madame de Sérizy, a young soldier of great promise, perished in Africa in the affair of the Makta. In these days rich families stand between the danger of impoverishing their children if they have too many, or of extinguishing their names if they have too few, — a singular result of the Code which Napoleon never thought of. By a curious turn of fortune Clémentine became, in spite of her father having squandered his substance on Florine (one of the most charming actresses in Paris), a great heiress. The Marquis de Ronquerolles, a clever diplomatist under the new dynasty, his sister, Madame de Sérizy, and the Chevalier du Rouvre agreed, in order to save their fortunes from the dissipations of the marquis, to settle them on their niece, to whom, moreover, they each pledged themselves to pay ten thousand francs a year from the day of her marriage.

It is quite unnecessary to say that the Polish count, though an exile, was no expense to the French government. Comte Adam Laginski belonged to one of the oldest and most illustrious families in Poland, which was allied to many of the princely houses of Ger-

many, — Sapiéha, Radziwill, Mniszech, Rzewuski, Czartoryski, Leczinski, Lubomirski, and all the other great Sarmatian *skis*. But heraldic knowledge is not the most distinguishing feature of the French nation under Louis-Philippe, and Polish nobility was no great recommendation to the bourgeoisie who were lordling it in those days. Besides, when Adam first made his appearance, in 1833, on the boulevard des Italiens, at Frascati, and at the Jockey-Club, he was leading the life of a young man who, having lost his political prospects, was taking his pleasure in Parisian dissipation. At first he was thought to be a student.

The Polish nationality had at this period fallen as low in French estimation, thanks to a shameful governmental reaction, as the republicans had sought to raise it. The singular struggle of the Movement against Resistance (two words which will be inexplicable thirty years hence) made sport of what ought to have been truly respected, — the name of a conquered nation to whom the French had offered hospitality, for whom fêtes had been given (with songs and dances by subscription), above all, a nation which in the Napoleonic struggle between France and Europe had given us six thousand men, and what men!

Do not infer from this that either side is taken here; either that of the Emperor Nicholas against Poland, or that of Poland against the Emperor. It would be

a foolish thing to slip political discussions into tales that are intended to amuse or interest. Besides, Russia and Poland were both right, — one to wish the unity of its empire, the other to desire its liberty. Let us say in passing that Poland might have conquered Russia by the influence of her morals instead of fighting her with weapons; she should have imitated China which, in the end, Chinesed the Tartars, and will, it is to be hoped, Chinese the English. Poland ought to have Polonized Russia. Poniatowski tried to do so in the least favorable portion of the empire; but as a king he was little understood, — because, possibly, he did not fully understand himself.

But how could the Parisians avoid disliking an unfortunate people who were the cause of that shameful falsehood enacted during the famous review at which all Paris declared its will to succor Poland? The Poles were held up to them as the allies of the republican party, and they never once remembered that Poland was a republic of aristocrats. From that day forth the bourgeoisie treated with base contempt the exiles of the nation it had worshipped a few days earlier. The wind of a riot is always enough to veer the Parisians from north to south under any régime. It is necessary to remember these sudden fluctuations of feeling in order to understand why it was that in 1835 the word “Pole” conveyed a derisive meaning to a

people who consider themselves the wittiest and most courteous nation on earth, and their city of Paris the focus of enlightenment, with the sceptre of arts and literature within its grasp.

There, are, alas! two sorts of Polish exiles, — the republican Poles, sons of Lelewel, and the noble Poles, at the head of whom is Prince Adam Czartoryski. The two classes are like fire and water; but why complain of that? Such divisions are always to be found among exiles, no matter of what nation they may be, or in what countries they take refuge. They carry their countries and their hatreds with them. Two French priests, who had emigrated to Brussels during the Revolution, showed the utmost horror of each other, and when one of them was asked why, he replied with a glance at his companion in misery: “Why? because he’s a Jansenist!” Dante would gladly have stabbed a Guelf had he met him in exile. This explains the virulent attacks of the French against the venerable Prince Adam Czartoryski, and the dislike shown to the better class of Polish exiles by the shop-keeping Cæsars and the licensed Alexanders of Paris.

In 1834, therefore, Adam Mitgislaz Laginski was something of a butt for Parisian pleasantry.

“He is rather nice, though he is a Pole,” said Rastignac.

“All these Poles pretend to be great lords,” said

Maxime de Trailles, "but this one does pay his gambling debts, and I begin to think he must have property."

Without wishing to offend these banished men, it may be allowable to remark that the light-hearted, careless inconsistency of the Sarmatian character does justify in some degree the satire of the Parisians, who, by the bye, would behave in like circumstances exactly as the Poles do. The French aristocracy, so nobly succored during the Revolution by the Polish lords, certainly did not return the kindness in 1832. Let us have the melancholy courage to admit this, and to say that the faubourg Saint-Germain is still the debtor of Poland.

Was Comte Adam rich, or was he poor, or was he an adventurer? This problem was long unsolved. The diplomatic salons, faithful to instructions, imitated the silence of the Emperor Nicholas, who held that all Polish exiles were virtually dead and buried. The court of the Tuileries, and all who took their cue from it, gave striking proof of the political quality which was then dignified by the name of sagacity. They turned their backs on a Russian prince with whom they had all been on intimate terms during the Emigration, merely because it was said that the Emperor Nicholas gave him the cold shoulder. Between the caution of the court and the prudence of the

diplomates, the Polish exiles of distinction lived in Paris in the Biblical solitude of *super flumina Babylonis*, or else they haunted a few salons which were the neutral ground of all opinions. In a city of pleasure, like Paris, where amusements abound on all sides, the heedless gayety of a Pole finds twice as many encouragements as it needs to a life of dissipation.

It must be said, however, that Adam had two points against him, — his appearance, and his mental equipment. There are two species of Pole, as there are two species of Englishwoman. When an Englishwoman is not very handsome she is horribly ugly. Comte Adam belonged in the second category of human beings. His small face, rather sharp in expression, looked as if it had been pressed in a vise. His short nose, and fair hair, and reddish beard and moustache made him look all the more like a goat because he was small and thin, and his tarnished yellow eyes caught you with that oblique look which Virgil celebrates. How came he, in spite of such obvious disadvantages, to possess really exquisite manners and a distinguished air? The problem is solved partly by the care and elegance of his dress, and partly by the training given him by his mother, a Radziwill. His courage amounted to daring, but his mind was not more than was needed for the ephemeral talk and pleasantry of Parisian conversation. And yet it would have been difficult to find among the young

men of fashion in Paris a single one who was his superior. Young men talk a great deal too much in these days of horses, money, taxes, deputies; French *conversation* is no longer what it was. Brilliancy of mind needs leisure and certain social inequalities to bring it out. There is, probably, more real conversation in Vienna or St. Petersburg than in Paris. Equals do not need to employ delicacy or shrewdness in speech; they blurt out things as they are. Consequently the dandies of Paris did not discover the great *seigneur* in the rather heedless young fellow who, in their talks, would flit from one subject to another, all the more intent upon amusement because he had just escaped from a great peril, and, finding himself in a city where his family was unknown, felt at liberty to lead a loose life without the risk of disgracing his name.

But one fine day in 1834 Adam suddenly bought a house in the rue de la Pépinière. Six months later his style of living was second to none in Paris. About the time when he thus began to take himself seriously he had seen Clémentine du Rouvre at the Opera and had fallen in love with her. A year later the marriage took place. The salon of Madame d'Espard was the first to sound his praises. Mothers of daughters then learned too late that as far back as the year 900 the family of the Laginski was among the most illustrious of the North. By an act of prudence which

was very unPolish, the mother of the young count had mortgaged her entire property on the breaking out of the insurrection for an immense sum lent by two Jewish bankers in Paris. Comte Adam was now in possession of eighty thousand francs a year. When this was discovered society ceased to be surprised at the imprudence which had been laid to the charge of Madame de Sérizy, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, and the Chevalier du Rouvre in yielding to the foolish passion of their niece. People jumped, as usual, from one extreme of judgment to the other.

During the winter of 1836 Comte Adam was the fashion, and Clémentine Laginska one of the queens of Paris. Madame Laginska is now a member of that charming circle of young women represented by Mesdames de Lestorade, de Portenduère, Marie de Vandenesse, du Guénic, and de Maufrigneuse, the flowers of our present Paris, who live at such immeasurable distance from the parvenus, the vulgarians, and the speculators of the new régime.

This preamble is necessary to show the sphere in which was done one of those noble actions, less rare than the calumniators of our time admit, — actions which, like pearls, the fruit of pain and suffering, are hidden within rough shells, lost in the gulf, the sea, the tossing waves of what we call society, the century, Paris, London, St. Petersburg, — or what you will.

If the axiom that architecture is the expression of manners and morals was ever proved, it was certainly after the insurrection of 1830, during the present reign of the house of Orléans. As all the old fortunes are diminishing in France, the majestic mansions of our ancestors are constantly being demolished and replaced by species of phalansteries, in which the peers of July occupy the third floor above some newly enriched empires on the lower floors. A mixture of styles is confusedly employed. As there is no longer a real court or nobility to give the tone, there is no harmony in the production of art. Never, on the other hand, has architecture discovered so many economical ways of imitating the real and the solid, or displayed more resources, more talent, in distributing them. Propose to an architect to build upon the garden at the back of an old mansion, and he will run you up a little Louvre overloaded with ornament. He will manage to get in a courtyard, stables, and if you care for it, a garden. Inside the house he will accumulate a quantity of little rooms and passages. He is so clever in deceiving the eye that you think you will have plenty of space; but it is only a nest of small rooms, after all, in which a ducal family has to turn itself about in the space that its own bakehouse formerly occupied.

The hôtel of the Comtesse Laginska, rue de la Pepinière, is one of these creations, and stands be-

tween court and garden. On the right, in the court, are the kitchens and offices; to the left the coach-house and stables. The porter's lodge is between two charming portes-cochères. The chief luxury of the house is a delightful greenhouse contrived at the end of a boudoir on the ground-floor which opens upon an admirable suite of reception rooms. An English philanthropist had built this architectural bijou, designed the garden, added the greenhouse, polished the doors, bricked the courtyard, painted the window-frames green, and realized, in short, a dream which resembled (proportions excepted) George the Fourth's Pavilion at Brighton. The inventive and industrious Parisian workman had moulded the doors and window-frames; the ceilings were imitated from the middle-ages or those of a Venetian palace; marble veneering abounded on the outer walls. Steinbock and François Souchet had designed the mantel-pieces and the panels above the doors; Schinner had painted the ceilings in his masterly manner. The beauties of the staircase, white as a woman's arm, defied those of the hôtel Rothschild. On account of the riots and the unsettled times, the cost of this folly was only about eleven hundred thousand francs, — to an Englishman a mere nothing. All this luxury, called princely by persons who do not know what real princes are, was built in the garden of the house of a purveyor made a

Croesus by the Revolution, who had escaped to Brussels and died there after going into bankruptcy. The Englishman died in Paris, of Paris; for to many persons Paris is a disease, — sometimes several diseases. His widow, a Methodist, had a horror of the little nabob establishment, and ordered it to be sold. Comte Adam bought it at a bargain; and how he came to do so shall presently be made known, for bargains were not at all in his line as a *grand seigneur*.

Behind the house lay the verdant velvet of an English lawn shaded at the lower end by a clump of exotic trees, in the midst of which stood a Chinese pagoda with soundless belfries and motionless golden eggs. The greenhouse concealed the garden wall on the northern side, the opposite wall was covered with climbing plants trained upon poles painted green and connected with crossway trellises. This lawn, this world of flowers, the gravelled paths, the simulated forest, the verdant palisades, were contained within the space of five and twenty square rods, which are worth to-day four hundred thousand francs, — the value of an actual forest. Here, in this solitude in the middle of Paris, the birds sang, thrushes, nightingales, warblers, bulfinches, and sparrows. The greenhouse was like an immense jardinière, filling the air with perfume in winter as in summer. The means by which its

atmosphere was made to order, torrid as in China or temperate as in Italy, were cleverly concealed. Pipes in which hot water circulated, or steam, were either hidden under ground or festooned with plants overhead. The boudoir was a large room. The miracle of the modern Parisian fairy named Architecture is to get all these many and great things out of a limited bit of ground.

The boudoir of the young countess was arranged to suit the taste of the artist to whom Comte Adam entrusted the decoration of the house. It is too full of pretty nothings to be a place for repose; one scarce knows where to sit down among carved Chinese worktables with their myriads of fantastic figures inlaid in ivory, cups of yellow topaz mounted on filagree, mosaics which inspire theft, Dutch pictures in the style which Schinner has adopted, angels such as Steinbock conceived but often could not execute, statuettes modelled by genius pursued by creditors (the real explanation of the Arabian myth), superb sketches by our best artists, lids of chests made into panels alternating with fluted draperies of Indian silk, portières hanging from rods of old oak in tapestried masses on which the figures of some hunting scene are swarming, pieces of furniture worthy to have belonged to Madame de Pompadour, Persian rugs, et cetera. For a last graceful touch, all these elegant things were subdued by the half-light

which filtered through embroidered curtains and added to their charm. On a table between the windows, among various curiosities, lay a whip, the handle designed by Mademoiselle de Fauveau, which proved that the countess rode on horseback.

Such is a lady's boudoir in 1837, — an exhibition of the contents of many shops, which amuse the eye, as if ennui were the one thing to be dreaded by the social world of the liveliest and most stirring capital in Europe. Why is there nothing of an inner life? nothing which leads to revery, nothing reposeful? Why indeed? Because no one in our day is sure of the future; we are living our lives like prodigal annuitants.

One morning Clémentine appeared to be thinking of something. She was lying at full length on one of those marvellous couches from which it is almost impossible to rise, the upholsterer having invented them for lovers of the *far niente* and its attendant joys of laziness to sink into. The doors of the greenhouse were open, letting the odors of vegetation and the perfume of the tropics pervade the room. The young wife was looking at her husband who was smoking a narghile, the only form of pipe she would have suffered in that room. The portières, held back by cords, gave a vista through two elegant salons, one white and gold, comparable only to that of the hôtel Forbin-Janson, the other in the style of the Renais-

sance. The dining-room, which had no rival in Paris except that of the Baron de Nucingen, was at the end of a short gallery decorated in the manner of the middle-ages. This gallery opened on the side of the courtyard upon a large antechamber, through which could be seen the beauties of the staircase.

The count and countess had just finished breakfast; the sky was a sheet of azure without a cloud, April was nearly over. They had been married two years, and Clémentine had just discovered for the first time that there was something resembling a secret or a mystery in her household. The Pole, let us say it to his honor, is usually helpless before a woman; he is so full of tenderness for her that in Poland he becomes her inferior, though Polish women make admirable wives. Now a Pole is still more easily vanquished by a Parisian woman. Consequently Comte Adam, pressed by questions, did not even attempt the innocent roguery of selling the suspected secret. It is always wise with a woman to get some good out of a mystery; she will like you the better for it, as a swindler respects an honest man the more when he finds he cannot swindle him. Brave in heart but not in speech, Comte Adam merely stipulated that he should not be compelled to answer till he had finished his narghile.

“If any difficulty occurred when we were travelling,”

said Clémentine, “you always dismissed it by saying, ‘Paz will settle that.’ You never wrote to any one but Paz. When we returned here everybody kept saying, ‘the captain, the captain.’ If I want the carriage — ‘the captain.’ Is there a bill to pay — ‘the captain.’ If my horse is not properly bitted, they must speak to Captain Paz. In short, it is like a game of dominoes — Paz is everywhere. I hear of nothing but Paz, but I never see Paz. Who and what is Paz? Why don’t you bring forth your Paz?”

“Is n’t everything going on right?” asked the count, taking the *bocchettino* of his narghile from his lips.

“Everything is going on so right that other people with an income of two hundred thousand francs would ruin themselves by going at our pace, and we have only one hundred and ten thousand.”

So saying she pulled the bell-cord (an exquisite bit of needlework). A footman entered, dressed like a minister.

“Tell Captain Paz that I wish to see him.”

“If you think you are going to find out anything that way —” said Comte Adam, laughing.

It is well to mention that Adam and Clémentine, married in December, 1835, had gone soon after the wedding to Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, where they spent the greater part of two years. Returning to Paris in November, 1837, the countess entered so-

iety for the first time as a married woman during the winter which had just ended, and she then became aware of the existence, half-suppressed and wholly dumb but very useful, of a species of factotum who was personally invisible, named Paz, — spelt thus, but pronounced “Patz.”

“Monsieur le capitaine Paz begs Madame la comtesse to excuse him,” said the footman, returning. “He is at the stables; as soon as he has changed his dress Comte Paz will present himself to Madame.”

“What was he doing at the stables?”

“He was showing them how to groom Madame’s horse,” said the man. “He was not pleased with the way Constantin did it.”

The countess looked at the footman. He was perfectly serious and did not add to his words the sort of smile by which servants usually comment on the actions of a superior who seems to them to derogate from his position.

“Ah! he was grooming Cora.”

“Madame la comtesse intends to ride out this morning?” said the footman, leaving the room without further answer.

“Is Paz a Pole?” asked Clémentine, turning to her husband, who nodded by way of affirmation.

Madame Laginska was silent, examining Adam. With her feet extended upon a cushion and her head

poised like that of a bird on the edge of its nest listening to the noises in a grove, she would have seemed enchanting even to a *blasé* man. Fair and slender, and wearing her hair in curls, she was not unlike those semi-romantic pictures in the Keepsakes, especially when dressed, as she was this morning, in a breakfast gown of Persian silk, the folds of which could not disguise the beauty of her figure or the slimness of her waist. The silk with its brilliant colors being crossed upon the bosom showed the spring of the neck, — its whiteness contrasting delightfully against the tones of a guipure lace which lay upon her shoulders. Her eyes and their long black lashes added at this moment to the expression of curiosity which puckered her pretty mouth. On the forehead, which was well modelled, an observer would have noticed a roundness characteristic of the true Parisian woman, — self-willed, merry, well-informed, but inaccessible to vulgar seductions. Her hands, which were almost transparent, were hanging down at the end of each arm of her chair; the tapering fingers, slightly turned up at their points, showed nails like almonds, which caught the light. Adam smiled at his wife's impatience, and looked at her with a glance which two years of married life had not yet chilled. Already the little countess had made herself mistress of the situation, for she scarcely paid attention to her hus-

“The countess beheld a tall and handsome man.”



band's admiration. In fact, in the look which she occasionally cast at him, there seemed to be the consciousness of a Frenchwoman's ascendancy over the puny, volatile, and red-haired Pole.

"Here comes Paz," said the count, hearing a step which echoed through the gallery.

The countess beheld a tall and handsome man, well-made, and bearing on his face the signs of pain which come of inward strength and secret endurance of sorrow. He wore one of those tight, frogged overcoats which were then called "polonaise." Thick, black hair, rather unkempt, covered his square head, and Clémentine noticed his broad forehead shining like a block of white marble, for Paz held his visored cap in his hand. The hand itself was like that of the Infant Hercules. Robust health flourished on his face, which was divided by a large Roman nose and reminded Clémentine of some handsome Transteverino. A black silk cravat added to the martial appearance of this six-foot mystery, with eyes of jet and Italian fervor. The amplitude of his pleated trousers, which allowed only the tips of his boots to be seen, revealed his faithfulness to the fashions of his own land. There was something really burlesque to a romantic woman in the striking contrast no one could fail to remark between the captain and the count, the little Pole with his pinched face and the stalwart soldier.

“Good morning, Adam,” he said familiarly. Then he bowed courteously as he asked Clémentine what he could do for her.

“You are Laginski’s friend !” exclaimed the countess.

“For life and death,” answered Paz, to whom the count threw a smile of affection as he drew a last puff from his perfumed pipe.

“Then why don’t you take your meals with us? why did you not accompany us to Italy and Switzerland? why do you hide yourself in such a way that I am unable to thank you for the constant services that you do for us?” said the countess, with much vivacity of manner but no feeling.

In fact, she thought she perceived in Paz a sort of voluntary servitude. Such an idea carried with it in her mind a certain contempt for a social amphibian, a being half-secretary, half-bailiff, and yet neither the one nor the other, a poor relation. an embarrassing friend.

“Because, countess,” he answered with perfect ease of manner, “there are no thanks due. I am Adam’s friend, and it gives me pleasure to take care of his interests.”

“And you remain standing for your pleasure, too,” remarked Comte Adam.

Paz sat down on a chair near the door.

“I remember seeing you about the time I was

married, and afterwards in the courtyard," said Clémentine. "But why do you put yourself in a position of inferiority, — you, Adam's friend?"

"I am perfectly indifferent to the opinion of the Parisians," he replied. "I live for myself, or, if you like, for you two."

"But the opinion of the world as to a friend-of my husband is not indifferent to me —"

"Ah, madame, the world will be satisfied if you tell them I am 'an original.'"

After a moment's silence he added, "Are you going out to-day?"

"Will you come with us to the Bois?"

"Certainly."

So saying, Paz bowed and withdrew.

"What a good soul he is!" said Adam. "He has all the simplicity of a child."

"Now tell me all about your relations with him," said Clémentine.

"Paz, my dear," said Laginski, "belongs to a noble family as old and illustrious as our own. One of the Pazzi of Florence, at the time of their disasters, fled to Poland, where he settled with some of his property and founded the Paz family, to which the title of count was granted. This family, which distinguished itself greatly in the glorious days of our royal republic, became rich. The graft from the tree that was felled

in Italy flourished so vigorously in Poland that there are several branches of the family still there. I need not tell you that some are rich and some are poor. Our Paz is the scion of a poor branch. He was an orphan, without other fortune than his sword, when he served in the regiment of the Grand Duke Constantine at the time of our revolution. Joining the Polish cause, he fought like a Pole, like a patriot, like a man who has nothing,—three good reasons for fighting well. In his last affair, thinking he was followed by his men, he dashed upon a Russian battery and was taken prisoner. I was there. His brave act roused me. ‘Let us go and get him!’ I said to my troop, and we charged the battery like a lot of foragers. I got Paz—I was the seventh man; we started twenty and came back eight, counting Paz. After Warsaw was sold we were forced to escape those Russians. By a curious chance, Paz and I happened to come together again, at the same hour and the same place, on the other side of the Vistula. I saw the poor captain arrested by some Prussians, who made themselves the blood-hounds of the Russians. When we have fished a man out of the Styx we cling to him. This new danger for poor Paz made me so unhappy that I let myself be taken too, thinking I could help him. Two men can get away where one will perish. Thanks to my name and some family

connections in Prussia, the authorities shut their eyes to my escape. I got my dear captain through as a man of no consequence, a family servant, and we reached Dantzic. There we got on board a Dutch vessel and went to London. It took us two months to get there. My mother was ill in England, and expecting me. Paz and I took care of her till her death, which the Polish troubles hastened. Then we left London and came to France. Men who go through such adversities become like brothers. When I reached Paris, at twenty-two years of age, and found I had an income of over sixty thousand francs a year, without counting the proceeds of the diamonds and the pictures sold by my mother, I wanted to secure the future of my dear Paz before I launched into dissipation. I had often noticed the sadness in his eyes — sometimes tears were in them. I had had good reason to understand his soul, which is noble, grand, and generous to the core. I thought he might not like to be bound by benefits to a friend who was six years younger than himself, unless he could repay them. I was careless and frivolous, just as a young fellow is, and I knew I was certain to ruin myself at play, or get inveigled by some woman, and Paz and I might then be parted; and though I had every intention of always looking out for him, I knew I might sometime or other forget to provide for him.

In short, my dear angel, I wanted to spare him the pain and mortification of having to ask me for money, or of having to hunt me up if he got into distress. So, one morning, after breakfast, when we were sitting with our feet on the andirons smoking pipes, I produced, — with the utmost precaution, for I saw him look at me uneasily, — a certificate of the Funds payable to bearer for a certain sum of money a year."

Clementine jumped up and went and seated herself on Adam's knee, put her arms round his neck, and kissed him. "Dear treasure!" she said, "how handsome he is! Well, what did Paz do?"

"Thaddeus turned pale," said the count, "but he didn't say a word."

"Oh! his name is Thaddeus, is it?"

"Yes; Thaddeus folded the paper and gave it back to me, and then he said: 'I thought, Adam, that we were one for life or death, and that we should never part. Do you want to be rid of me?' 'Oh!' I said, 'if you take it that way, Thaddeus, don't let us say another word about it. If I ruin myself you shall be ruined too.' 'You haven't fortune enough to live as a Laginski should,' he said, 'and you need a friend who will take care of your affairs, and be a father and a brother and a trusty confidant.' My dear child, as Paz said that he had in his look and voice, calm as they were, a maternal emotion, and also the gratitude

of an Arab, the fidelity of a dog, the friendship of a savage, — not displayed but ever ready. Faith! I seized him, as we Poles do, with a hand on each shoulder, and I kissed him on the lips. ‘For life and death, then! all that I have is yours — do what you will with it.’ It was he who found me this house and bought it for next to nothing. He sold my Funds high and bought in low, and we have paid for this barrack with the profits. He knows horses, and he manages to buy and sell at such advantage that my stable really costs very little; and yet I have the finest horses and the most elegant equipages in all Paris. Our servants, brave Polish soldiers chosen by him, would go through fire and water for us. I seem, as you say, to be ruining myself; and yet Paz keeps the house with such method and economy that he has even repaired some of my foolish losses at play, — the thoughtless folly of a young man. My dear, Thaddeus is as shrewd as two Genoese, as eager for gain as a Polish Jew, and provident as a good housekeeper. I never could force him to live as I did when I was a bachelor. Sometimes I had to use a sort of friendly coercion to make him go to the theatre with me when I was alone, or to the jovial little dinners I used to give at a tavern. He doesn’t like social life.”

“What does he like, then?” asked Clémentine.

“Poland; he loves Poland and pines for it. His

only spendings are sums he gives, more in my name than in his own, to some of our poor brother-exiles."

"Well, I shall love him, the fine fellow!" said the countess, "he looks to me as simple-hearted as he is grand."

"All these pretty things you have about you," continued Adam, who praised his friend in the noblest security, "he picked up; he bought them at auction, or as bargains from the dealers. Oh! he's keener than they are themselves. If you see him rubbing his hands in the courtyard, you may be sure he has traded away one good horse for a better. He lives for me; his happiness is to see me elegant, in a perfectly appointed equipage. The duties he takes upon himself are all accomplished without fuss or emphasis. One evening I lost twenty thousand francs at whist. 'What will Paz say?' thought I as I walked home. Paz paid them to me, not without a sigh; but he never reproached me, even by a look. But that sigh of his restrained me more than the remonstrances of uncles, mothers, or wives could have done. 'Do you regret the money?' I said to him. 'Not for you or me, no,' he replied; 'but I was thinking that twenty poor Poles could have lived a year on that sum.' You must understand that the Pazzi are fully the equal of the Laginski, so I could n't regard my dear Paz as an inferior. I never went out or came in without going first

to Paz, as I would to my father. My fortune is his; and Thaddeus knows that if danger threatened him I would fling myself into it and drag him out, as I have done before."

"And that is saying a good deal, my dear friend," said the countess. "Devotion is like a flash of lightning. Men devote themselves in battle, but they no longer have the heart for it in Paris."

"Well," replied Adam, "I am always ready, as in battle, to devote myself to Paz. Our two characters have kept their natural asperities and defects, but the mutual comprehension of our souls has tightened the bond already close between us. It is quite possible to save a man's life and kill him afterwards if we find him a bad fellow; but Paz and I know *that* of each other which makes our friendship indissoluble. There's a constant exchange of happy thoughts and impressions between us; and really, perhaps, such a friendship as ours is richer than love."

A pretty hand closed the count's mouth so promptly that the action was somewhat like a blow.

"Yes," he said, "friendship, my dear angel, knows nothing of bankrupt sentiments and collapsed joys. Love, after giving more than it has, ends by giving less than it receives."

"One side as well as the other," remarked Clémentine laughing.

“Yes,” continued Adam, “whereas friendship only increases. You need not pucker up your lips at that, for we are, you and I, as much friends as lovers; we have, at least I hope so, combined the two sentiments in our happy marriage.”

“I’ll explain to you what it is that has made you and Thaddeus such good friends,” said Clémentine. “The difference in the lives you lead comes from your tastes and from necessity; from your likings, not your positions. As far as one can judge from merely seeing a man once, and also from what you tell me, there are times when the subaltern might become the superior.”

“Oh, Paz is truly my superior,” said Adam, naïvely: “I have no advantage over him except mere luck.”

His wife kissed him for the generosity of those words.

“The extreme care with which he hides the grandeur of his feelings is one form of his superiority,” continued the count. “I said to him once: ‘You are a sly one; you have in your heart a vast domain within which you live and think.’ He has a right to the title of count; but in Paris he won’t be called anything but captain.”

“The fact is that the Florentine of the middle-ages has reappeared in our century,” said the countess. “Dante and Michael Angelo are in him.”

“That’s the very truth,” cried Adam. “He is a poet in soul.”

“So here I am, married to two Poles,” said the young countess, with a gesture worthy of some genius of the stage.

“Dear child!” said Adam, pressing her to him, “it would have made me very unhappy if my friend did not please you. We were both rather afraid of it, he and I, though he was delighted at my marriage. You will make him very happy if you tell him that you love him, — yes, as an old friend.”

“I’ll go and dress, the day is so fine; and we will all three ride together,” said Clémentine, ringing for her maid.

II.

PAZ was leading so subterranean a life that the fashionable world of Paris asked who he was when the Comtesse Laginska was seen in the Bois de Boulogne riding between her husband and a stranger. During the ride Clémentine insisted that Thaddeus should dine with them. This caprice of the sovereign lady compelled Paz to make an evening toilet. Clémentine dressed for the occasion with a certain coquetry, in a style that impressed even Adam himself when she entered the salon where the two friends awaited her.

“Comte Paz,” she said, “you must go with us to the Opera.”

This was said in the tone which, coming from a woman means: “If you refuse we shall quarrel.”

“Willingly, madame,” replied the captain. “But as I have not the fortune of a count, have the kindness to call me captain.”

“Very good, captain; give me your arm,” she said, — taking it and leading the way to the dining-room with the flattering familiarity which enchants all lovers.

The countess placed the captain beside her; his behavior was that of a poor sub-lieutenant dining at his general's table. He let Clémentine talk, listened deferentially as to a superior, did not differ with her in anything, and waited to be questioned before he spoke at all. He seemed actually stupid to the countess, whose coquettish little ways missed their mark in presence of such frigid gravity and conventional respect. In vain Adam kept saying: "Do be lively, Thaddeus; one would really suppose you were not at home. You must have made a wager to disconcert Clémentine." Thaddeus continued heavy and half asleep. When the servants left the room at the end of the dessert the captain explained that his habits were diametrically opposite to those of society, — he went to bed at eight o'clock and got up very early in the morning; and he excused his dulness on the ground of being sleepy.

"My intention in taking you to the Opera was to amuse you, captain; but do as you prefer," said Clémentine, rather piqued.

"I will go," said Paz.

"Duprez sings 'Guillaume Tell,'" remarked Adam.

"But perhaps you would rather go to the *Variétés*?"

The captain smiled and rang the bell. "Tell Constantin," he said to the footman, "to put the horses to the carriage instead of the coupé. We should be rather squeezed otherwise," he said to the count.

"A Frenchman would have forgotten that," remarked Clémentine, smiling.

"Ah! but we are Florentines transplanted to the North," answered Thaddeus with a refinement of accent and a look in his eyes which made his conduct at table seem assumed for the occasion. There was too evident a contrast between his involuntary self-revelation in this speech and his behavior during dinner. Clémentine examined the captain with a few of those covert glances which show a woman's surprise and also her capacity for observation.

It resulted from this little incident that silence reigned in the salon while the three took their coffee, a silence rather annoying to Adam, who was incapable of imagining the cause of it. Clémentine no longer tried to draw out Thaddeus. The captain, on the other hand, retreated within his military stiffness and came out of it no more, neither on the way to the Opera nor in the box, where he seemed to be asleep.

"You see, madame, that I am a very stupid man," he said during the dance in the last act of "Guillaume Tell." "Am I not right to keep, as the saying is, to my own specialty?"

"In truth, my dear captain, you are neither a talker nor a man of the world, but you are perhaps Polish."

"Therefore leave me to look after your pleasures, your property, your household — it is all I am good for."

“Tartufe! pooh!” cried Adam, laughing. “My dear, he is full of ardor; he is thoroughly educated; he can, if he chooses, hold his own in any salon. Clémentine, don’t believe his modesty.”

“Adieu, comtesse; I have obeyed your wishes so far; and now I will take the carriage and go home to bed and send it back for you.”

Clémentine bowed her head and let him go without replying.

“What a bear!” she said to the count. “You are a great deal nicer.”

Adam pressed her hand when no one was looking.

“Poor, dear Thaddeus,” he said, “he is trying to make himself disagreeable where most men would try to seem more amiable than I.”

“Oh!” she said, “I am not sure but what there is some *calculation* in his behavior; he would have taken in an ordinary woman.”

Half an hour later, when the chasseur, Boleslas, called out “Gate!” and the carriage was waiting for it to swing back, Clémentine said to her husband, “Where does the captain perch?”

“Why, there!” replied Adam, pointing to a floor above the porte-cochère which had one window looking on the street. “His apartments are over the coachhouse.”

“Who lives on the other side?” asked the countess.

“No one as yet,” said Adam; “I mean that apartment for our children and their instructors.”

“He did n’t go to bed,” said the countess, observing lights in Thaddeus’s rooms when the carriage had passed under the portico supported by columns copied from those of the Tuileries, which replaced a vulgar zinc awning painted in stripes like cloth.

The captain, in his dressing-gown with a pipe in his mouth, was watching Clémentine as she entered the vestibule. The day had been a hard one for him. And here is the reason why: A great and terrible emotion had taken possession of his heart on the day when Adam made him go to the Opera to see and give his opinion on *Mademoiselle du Rouvre*; and again when he saw her on the occasion of her marriage, and recognized in her the woman whom a man is forced to love exclusively. For this reason Paz strongly advised and promoted the long journey to Italy and elsewhere after the marriage. At peace so long as Clémentine was away, his trial was renewed on the return of the happy household. As he sat at his window on this memorable night, smoking his *latakia* in a pipe of wild-cherry wood six feet long, given to him by Adam, these are the thoughts that were passing through his mind:—

“I, and God, who will reward me for suffering in silence, alone know how I love her! But how shall I manage to have neither her love nor her dislike?”

And his thoughts travelled far on this strange theme.

It must not be supposed that Thaddeus was living without pleasure in the midst of his sufferings. The deceptions of this day, for instance, were a source of inward joy to him. Since the return of the count and countess he had daily felt ineffable satisfactions in knowing himself necessary to a household which, without his devotion to its interests, would infallibly have gone to ruin. What fortune can bear the strain of reckless prodigality? Clémentine, brought up by a spendthrift father, knew nothing of the management of a household which the women of the present day, however rich or noble they may be, are often compelled to undertake themselves. How few, in these days, keep a steward. Adam, on the other hand, son of one of the great Polish lords who let themselves be preyed on by the Jews, and are wholly incapable of managing even the wreck of their vast fortunes (for fortunes are vast in Poland), was not of a nature to check his own fancies or those of his wife. Left to himself he would probably have been ruined before his marriage. Paz had prevented him from gambling at the Bourse, and that says all.

Under these circumstances, Thaddeus, feeling that he loved Clémentine in spite of himself, had not the resource of leaving the house and travelling in other lands to forget his passion. Gratitude, the key-note

of his life, held him bound to that household where he alone could look after the affairs of the heedless owners. The long absence of Adam and Clémentine had given him peace. But the countess had returned more lovely than ever, enjoying the freedom which marriage brings to a Parisian woman, displaying the graces of a young wife and the nameless attraction she gains from the happiness, or the independence, bestowed upon her by a young man as trustful, as chivalric, and as much in love as Adam. To know that he was the pivot on which the splendor of the household depended, to see Clémentine when she got out of her carriage on returning from some fête, or got into it in the morning when she took her drive, to meet her on the boulevards in her pretty equipage, looking like a flower in a whorl of leaves, inspired poor Thaddeus with mysterious delights, which glowed in the depths of his heart but gave no signs upon his face.

How happened it that for five whole months the countess had never perceived the captain? Because he hid himself from her knowledge, and carefully concealed the pains he took to avoid her. Nothing so resembles the Divine love as hopeless human love. A man must have great depth of heart to devote himself in silence and obscurity to a woman. In such a heart is the worship of love for love's sake only — sublime avarice, sublime because ever generous and founded on

the mysterious existence of the principles of creation. *Effect* is nature, and nature is enchanting; it belongs to man, to the poet, the painter, the lover. But *Cause*, to a few privileged souls and to certain mighty thinkers, is superior to nature. Cause is God. In the sphere of causes live the Newtons and all such thinkers as Laplace, Kepler, Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Buffon; also the true poets and solitaires of the second Christian century, and the Saint Teresas of Spain, and such sublime ecstasies. All human sentiments bear analogy to these conditions whenever the mind abandons Effect for Cause. Thaddeus had reached this height, at which all things change their relative aspect. Filled with the joys unutterable of a creator he had attained in his love to all that genius has revealed to us of grandeur.

“No,” he was thinking to himself as he watched the curling smoke of his pipe, “she was not entirely deceived. She might break up my friendship with Adam if she took a dislike to me; but if she coquetted with me to amuse herself, what would become of me?”

The conceit of this last supposition was so foreign to the modest nature and Teutonic timidity of the captain that he scolded himself for admitting it, and went to bed, resolved to await events before deciding on a course.

The next day Clémentine breakfasted very contentedly without Paz, and without even noticing his

disobedience to her orders. It happened to be her reception day, when the house was thrown open with a splendor that was semi-royal. She paid no attention to the absence of Comte Paz, on whom all the burden of these parade days fell.

“ Good ! ” thought he, as he heard the last carriages driving away at two in the morning ; “ it was only the caprice or the curiosity of a Parisian woman that made her want to see me.”

After that the captain went back to his ordinary habits and ways, which had been somewhat upset by this incident. Diverted by her Parisian occupations, Clémentine appeared to have forgotten Paz. It must not be thought an easy matter to reign a queen over fickle Paris. Does any one suppose that fortunes alone are risked in the great game? The winters are to fashionable women what a campaign once was to the soldiers of the Empire. What works of art and genius are expended on a gown or a garland in which to make a sensation ! A fragile, delicate creature will wear her stiff and brilliant harness of flowers and diamonds, silk and steel, from nine at night till two and often three o'clock in the morning. She eats little, to attract remark to her slender waist ; she satisfies her hunger with debilitating tea, sugared cakes, ices which heat her, or slices of heavy pastry. The stomach is made to yield to the orders of coquetry. The awakening

comes too late. A fashionable woman's whole life is in contradiction to the laws of nature, and nature is pitiless. She has no sooner risen than she makes an elaborate morning toilet, and thinks of the one which she means to wear in the afternoon. The moment she is dressed she has to receive and make visits, and go to the Bois either on horseback or in a carriage. She must practise the art of smiling, and must keep her mind on the stretch to invent new compliments which shall seem neither common nor far-fetched. All women do not succeed in this. It is no surprise, therefore, to find a young woman who entered fashionable society fresh and healthy, faded and worn out at the end of three years. Six months spent in the country will hardly heal the wounds of the winter. We hear continually, in these days, of mysterious ailments, — gastritis, and so forth, — ills unknown to women when they busied themselves about their households. In the olden time women only appeared in the world at intervals; now they are always on the scene. Clémentine found she had to struggle for her supremacy. She was cited, and that alone brought jealousies; and the care and watchfulness exacted by this contest with her rivals left little time even to love her husband. Paz might well be forgotten. Nevertheless, in the month of May, as she drove home from the Bois, just before she left Paris for Ronquerolles, her uncle's estate in Burgundy, she

noticed Thaddeus, elegantly dressed, sauntering on one of the side-paths of the Champs-Élysées, in the seventh heaven of delight at seeing his beautiful countess in her elegant carriage with its spirited horses and sparkling liveries, — in short, his beloved family the admired of all.

“There’s the captain,” she said to her husband.

“He’s happy!” said Adam. “This is his delight. He knows there’s no equipage more elegant than ours, and he is rejoicing to think that some people envy it. Have you only just noticed him? I see him there nearly every day.”

“I wonder what he is thinking about now,” said Clémentine.

“He is thinking that this winter has cost a good deal, and that it is time we went to economize with your old uncle Ronquerolles,” replied Adam.

The countess stopped the carriage near Paz, and bade him take the seat beside her. Thaddeus grew as red as a cherry.

“I shall poison you,” he said; “I have been smoking.”

“Does n’t Adam poison me?” she said.

“Yes, but he is Adam,” returned the captain.

“And why can’t Thaddeus have the same privileges?” asked the countess, smiling.

That divine smile had a power which triumphed over the heroic resolutions of poor Paz; he looked at

Clémentine with all the fire of his soul in his eyes, though, even so, its flame was tempered by the angelic gratitude of the man whose life was based upon that virtue. The countess folded her arms in her shawl, lay back pensively on her cushions, ruffling the feathers of her pretty bonnet, and looked at the people who passed her. That flash of a great and hitherto resigned soul reached her sensibilities. What was Adam's merit in her eyes? It was natural enough to have courage and generosity. But Thaddeus — surely Thaddeus possessed, or seemed to possess, some great superiority over Adam. They were dangerous thoughts which took possession of the countess's mind as she again noticed the contrast of the fine presence that distinguished Thaddeus, and the puny frame which in Adam showed the degenerating effects of intermarriage among the Polish aristocratic families. The devil alone knew the thoughts that were in Clémentine's head, for she sat still, with thoughtful, dreamy eyes, and without saying a word until they reached home.

“ You will dine with us ; I shall be angry if you disobey me,” she said as the carriage turned in. “ You are Thaddeus to me, as you are to Adam. I know your obligations to him, but I also know those we are under to you. Both generousities are natural — but you are generous every day and all day. My father dines here to-day, also my uncle Ronquerolles and my aunt Ma-

dame de Sérizy. Dress yourself therefore," she said, taking the hand he offered to assist her from the carriage.

Thaddeus went to his own room to dress with a joyful heart, though shaken by an inward dread. He went down at the last moment and behaved through dinner as he had done on the first occasion, that is, like a soldier fit only for his duties as steward. But this time Clémentine was not his dupe; his glance had enlightened her. The Marquis de Ronquerolles, one of the ablest diplomates after Talleyrand, who had served with de Marsay during his short ministry, had been informed by his niece of the real worth and character of Comte Paz, and knew how modestly he made himself the steward of his friend Laginski.

"And why is this the first time I have the pleasure of seeing Comte Paz?" asked the marquis.

"Because he is so shy and retiring," replied Clémentine with a look at Paz telling him to change his behavior.

Alas! that we should have to avow it, at the risk of rendering the captain less interesting, but Paz, though superior to his friend Adam, was not a man of parts. His apparent superiority was due to his misfortunes. In his lonely and poverty-stricken life in Warsaw he had read and taught himself a good deal; he had compared and meditated. But the gift of original thought

which makes a great man he did not possess, and it can never be acquired. Paz, great in heart only, approached in heart to the sublime; but in the sphere of sentiments, being more a man of action than of thought, he kept his thoughts to himself; and they only served therefore to eat his heart out. What, after all, is a thought unexpressed?

After Clémentine's little speech, the Marquis de Ronquerolles and his sister exchanged a singular glance, embracing their niece, Comte Adam, and Paz. It was one of those rapid scenes which take place only in France and Italy, — the two regions of the world (all courts excepted) where eyes can say everything. To communicate to the eye the full power of the soul, to give it the value of speech, and to infuse a poem or a drama into a glance, needs either the pressure of extreme servitude, or complete liberty. Adam, the Marquis du Rouvre, and Clémentine did not observe this luminous by-play of the old coquette and the old diplomatist, but Paz, the faithful watchdog, understood its meaning. It was, we must remark, an affair of two seconds; but to describe the tempest it roused in the captain's soul would take far too much space in this brief history.

“What!” he said to himself, “do the aunt and uncle think I might be loved? Then my happiness only depends on my own audacity! But Adam —”

Ideal love and desire clashed with gratitude and friendship, all equally powerful, and, for a moment, love prevailed. The lover would have his day. Paz became brilliant, he tried to please, he told the story of the Polish insurrection in noble words, being questioned about it by the diplomatist. By the end of dinner Paz saw Clémentine hanging upon his lips and regarding him as a hero, forgetting that Adam too, after sacrificing a third of his vast fortune, had been an exile. At nine o'clock, after coffee had been served, Madame de Sérizy kissed her niece on the forehead, pressed her hand, and went away, taking Adam with her and leaving the Marquis de Ronquerolles and the Marquis du Rouvre, who soon followed. Paz and Clémentine were alone together.

"I will leave you now, madame," said Thaddeus. "You will of course rejoin them at the Opera?"

"No," she answered, "I don't like dancing, and they give an odious ballet to-night 'La Révolte au Sérail.'"

There was a moment's silence.

"Two years ago Adam would not have gone to the Opera without me," said Clémentine, not looking at Paz.

"He loves you madly," replied Thaddeus.

"Yes, and because he loves me madly he is all the more likely not to love me to-morrow," said the countess.

“How inexplicable Parisian women are!” exclaimed Thaddeus. “When they are loved to madness they want to be loved reasonably: and when they are loved reasonably they reproach a man for not loving them at all.”

“And they are quite right. Thaddeus,” she went on, smiling, “I know Adam well; I am not angry with him; he is volatile and above all *grand seigneur*. He will always be content to have me as his wife and he will never oppose any of my tastes, but —”

“Where is the marriage in which there are no *butts*?” said Thaddeus, gently, trying to give another direction to Clémentine’s mind.

The least presuming of men might well have had the thought which came near rendering this poor lover beside himself; it was this: “If I do not tell her now that I love her I am a fool,” he kept saying to himself.

Neither spoke; and there came between the pair one of those deep silences that are crowded with thoughts. The countess examined Paz covertly, and Paz observed her in a mirror. Buried in an armchair like a man digesting his dinner, the image of a husband or an indifferent old man, Paz crossed his hands upon his stomach and twirled his thumbs mechanically, looking stupidly at them.

“Why don’t you tell me something good of Adam?”

cried Clémentine suddenly. "Tell me that he is not volatile, you who know him so well."

The cry was fine.

"Now is the time," thought poor Paz, "to put an insurmountable barrier between us. Tell you good of Adam?" he said aloud. "I love him; you would not believe me; and I am incapable of telling you harm. My position is very difficult between you."

Clémentine lowered her head and looked down at the tips of his varnished boots.

"You Northern men have nothing but physical courage," she said complainingly; "you have no constancy in your opinions."

"How will you amuse yourself alone, madame?" said Paz, assuming an careless air.

"Are not you going to keep me company?"

"Excuse me for leaving you."

"What do you mean? Where are you going?"

The thought of an heroic falsehood had come into his head.

"I — I am going to the Circus in the Champs Élysées; it opens to-night, and I can't miss it."

"Why not?" said Clémentine, questioning him by a look that was half anger.

"Must I tell you why?" he said, coloring; "must I confide to you what I hide from Adam, who thinks my only love is Poland."

“ Ah ! a secret in our noble captain ? ”

“ A disgraceful one — which you will perhaps understand, and pity.”

“ You, disgraced ? ”

“ Yes, I, Comte Paz ; I am madly in love with a girl who travels all over France with the Bouthor family, — people who have the rival circus to Franconi ; but they play only at fairs. I have made the director at the Cirque-Olympique engage her.”

“ Is she handsome ? ”

“ To my thinking,” said Paz, in a melancholy tone. “ Malaga (that’s her stage name) is strong, active, and supple. Why do I prefer her to all other women in the world ? — well, I can’t tell you. When I look at her, with her black hair tied with a blue satin ribbon, floating on her bare and olive-colored shoulders, and when she is dressed in a white tunic with a gold edge, and a knitted silk bodice that makes her look like a living Greek statue, and when I see her carrying those flags in her hand to the sound of martial music, and jumping through the paper hoops which tear as she goes through, and lighting so gracefully on the galloping horse to such applause, — no hired clapping, — well, all that moves me.”

“ More than a handsome woman in a ballroom ? ” asked Clémentine, with amazement and curiosity.

“ Yes,” answered Paz, in a choking voice. “ Such

agility, such grace under constant danger seems to me the height of triumph for a woman. Yes, madame, Cinti and Malibran, Grisi and Taglioni, Pasta and Ellsler, all who reign or have reigned on the stage, can't be compared, to my mind, with Malaga, who can jump on or off a horse at full gallop, or stand on the point of one foot and fall easily into the saddle, and knit stockings, break eggs, and make an omelette with the horse at full speed, to the admiration of the people, — the real people, peasants and soldiers. Malaga, madame, is dexterity personified; her little wrist or her little foot can rid her of three or four men. She is the goddess of gymnastics."

"She must be stupid —"

"Oh, no," said Paz, "I find her as amusing as the heroine of 'Peveril of the Peak.' Thoughtless as a Bohemian, she says everything that comes into her head; she thinks no more about the future than you do of the sous you fling to the poor. She says grand things sometimes. You could n't make her believe that an old diplomatist was a handsome young man, not if you offered her a million of francs. Such love as hers is perpetual flattery to a man. Her health is positively insolent, and she has thirty-two orient pearls in lips of coral. Her muzzle — that's what she calls the lower part of her face — has, as Shakspeare expresses it, the savor of a heifer's nose. She can make a man un-

happy. She likes handsome men, strong men, Alexanders, gymnasts, clowns. Her trainer, a horrible brute, used to beat her to make her supple, and graceful, and intrepid — ”

“ You are positively intoxicated with Malaga.”

“ Oh, she is called Malaga only on the posters,” said Paz, with a piqued air. “ She lives in the rue Saint-Lazare, in a pretty apartment on the third story, all velvet and silk, like a princess. She has two lives, her circus life and the life of a pretty woman.”

“ Does she love you?”

“ She loves me — now you will laugh — solely because I’m a Pole. She saw an engraving of Poles rushing with Poniatowski into the Elster, — for all France persists in thinking that the Elster, where it is impossible to get drowned, is an impetuous flood, in which Poniatowski and his followers were engulfed. But in the midst of all this I am very unhappy, madame.”

A tear of rage fell from his eyes and affected the countess.

“ You men have such a passion for singularity.”

“ And you?” said Thaddeus.

“ I know Adam so well that I am certain he could forget me for some mountebank like your Malaga. Where did you first see her?”

“ At Saint-Cloud, last September, on the fête-day.

She was at a corner of a booth covered with flags, where the shows are given. Her comrades, all in Polish costumes, were making a horrible racket. I watched her standing there, silent and dumb, and I thought I saw a melancholy expression in her face; in truth there was enough about her to sadden a girl of twenty. That touched me."

The countess was sitting in a delicious attitude, pensive and rather melancholy.

"Poor, poor Thaddens!" she exclaimed. Then, with the kindliness of a true great lady she added, not without a malicious smile, "Well go, go to your Circus."

Thaddeus took her hand, kissed it, leaving a hot tear upon it, and went out.

Having invented this passion for a cirëus-rider, he bethought him that he must give it some reality. The only truth in his tale was the momentary attention he had given to Malaga at Saint-Cloud; and he had since seen her name on the posters of the Circus, where the clown, for a tip of five francs, had told him that the girl was a foundling, stolen perhaps. Thaddeus now went to the Circus and saw her again. For ten francs one of the grooms (who take the place in circuses of the dressers at a theatre) informed him that Malaga was named Marguerite Turquet, and lived on the fifth story of a house in the rue des Fossés-du-Temple.

The following day Paz went to the faubourg du Temple, found the house, and asked to see Mademoiselle Turquet, who during the summer was substitute for the leading horsewoman at the Cirque-Olympique, and a supernumerary at a boulevard theatre in winter.

“Malaga!” cried the portress, rushing into the attic, “there’s a fine gentleman wanting you. He is getting information from Chapuzot, who is playing him off to give me time to tell you.”

“Thank you, M’ame Chapuzot; but what will he think of me if he finds me ironing my gown?”

“Pooh! when a man’s in love he loves everything about us.”

“Is he an Englishman? they are fond of horses.”

“No, he looks to me Spanish.”

“That’s a pity; they say Spaniards are always poor. Stay here with me, M’ame Chapuzot; I don’t want him to think I’m deserted.”

“Who is it you are looking for, monsieur?” asked Madame Chapuzot, opening the door for Thaddeus, who had now come upstairs.

“Mademoiselle Turquet.”

“My dear,” said the portress, with an air of importance, “here is some one to see you.”

A line on which the clothes were drying caught the captain’s hat and knocked it off.

“What is it you wish, monsieur?” said Malaga, picking up the hat and giving it to him.

“I saw you at the Circus,” said Thaddeus, “and you reminded me of a daughter whom I have lost, mademoiselle; and out of affection for my Héloïse, whom you resemble in a most striking manner, I should like to be of some service to you, if you will permit me.”

“Why, certainly; pray sit down, general,” said Madame Chapuzot; “nothing could be more straightforward, more gallant.”

“But I am not gallant, my good lady,” exclaimed Paz. “I am an unfortunate father who tries to deceive himself by a resemblance.”

“Then am I to pass for your daughter?” said Malaga, slyly, and not in the least suspecting the perfect sincerity of his proposal.

“Yes,” said Paz, “and I’ll come and see you sometimes. But you shall be lodged in better rooms, comfortably furnished.”

“I shall have furniture!” cried Malaga, looking at Madame Chapuzot.

“And servants,” said Paz, “and all you want.”

Malaga looked at the stranger suspiciously.

“What countryman is monsieur?”

“I am a Pole.”

“Oh! then I accept,” she said.

Paz departed, promising to return.

“ Well, that’s a stiff one ! ” said Marguerite Turquet looking at Madame Chapuzot ; “ I ’m half afraid he is wheedling me, to carry out some fancy of his own — Pooh ! I ’ll risk it.”

A month after this eccentric interview the circus rider was living in a comfortable apartment furnished by Comte Adam’s own upholsterer, Paz having judged it desirable to have his folly talked about at the *hôte Laginski*. Malaga, to whom this adventure was like a leaf out of the *Arabian Nights*, was served by Monsieur and Madame Chapuzot in the double capacity of friends and servants. The Chapuzots and Marguerite were constantly expecting some result of all this ; but at the end of three months none of them were able to make out the meaning of the Polish count’s caprice. Paz arrived duly and passed about an hour there once a week, during which time he sat in the salon, and he never went into Malaga’s boudoir nor into her bedroom, in spite of the clever manœuvring of the Chapuzots and Malaga to get him there. The count would ask questions as to the small events of Marguerite’s life, and each time that he came he left two gold pieces of forty francs each on the mantel-piece.

“ He looks as if he did n’t care to be here,” said Madame Chapuzot.

“ Yes,” said Malaga, “ the man’s as cold as an icicle.”

list, and the Polc was a magnetizer who was using her to discover the philosopher's stone. Some even more envenomed scandals drove her to a curiosity that was greater than Psyche's. She reported them in tears to Paz.

"When I want to injure a woman," she said in conclusion, "I don't calumniate her; I don't declare that some one magnetizes her to get stones out of her, but I say plainly that she is humpbacked, and I prove it. Why do you compromise me in this way?"

Paz maintained a cruel silence. Madame Chapuzot was not long in discovering the name and title of Comte Paz; then she heard certain positive facts at the hôtel Laginski: for instance, that Paz was a bachelor, and had never been known to have a daughter, alive or dead, in Poland or in France. After that Malaga could not control a feeling of terror.

"My dear child," Madame Chapuzot would say, "that monster" — (a man who contented himself with only looking, in a sly way, — not daring to come out and say things, — and such a beautiful creature too, as Malaga, — of course such a man was a monster, according to Madame Chapuzot's ideas) — "that monster is trying to get a hold upon you, and make you do something illegal and criminal. Holy Father, if you should get into the police-courts! it makes me tremble from head to foot; suppose they should put you in the news-

papers ! I'll tell you what I should do in your place ; I'd warn the police."

One particular day, after many foolish notions had fermented for some time in Malaga's mind, Paz having laid his money as usual on the mantel-piece, she seized the bits of gold and flung them in his face, crying out, " I don't want stolen money ! "

The captain gave the gold to Chapuzot, went away without a word, and did not return.

Clémentine was at this time at her uncle's place in Burgundy.

When the Circus troop discovered that Malaga had lost her Polish count, much excitement was produced among them. Malaga's display of honor was considered folly by some, and shrewdness by others. The conduct of the Pole, however, even when discussed by the cleverest of the women, seemed inexplicable. Thaddæus received in the course of the next week thirty-seven letters from women of their kind. Happily for him, his astonishing reserve did not excite the curiosity of the fashionable world, and was only discussed in the demi-mondaine regions.

Two weeks later the handsome circus-rider, crippled by debt, wrote the following letter to Comte Paz, which, having fallen into the hands of Comte Adam, was read by several of the dandies of the day, who pronounced it a masterpiece : —

“ You, whom I still dare to call my friend, will you not pity me after all that has passed, — which you have so ill understood? My heart disavows whatever may have wounded your feelings. If I was fortunate enough to charm you and keep you beside me in the past, return to me ; otherwise, I shall fall into despair. Poverty has overtaken me, and you do not know what *horrid things* it brings with it. Yesterday I lived on a herring at two sous, and one sou of bread. Is that a breakfast for the woman you loved? The Chapuzots have left me, though they seemed so devoted. Your desertion has caused me to see to the bottom of all human attachments. The dog we feed does not leave us, but the Chapuzots have gone. A sheriff has seized everything on behalf of the landlord, who has no heart, and the jeweller, who refused to wait even ten days, — for when we lose the confidence of such as you, credit goes too. What a position for women who have nothing to reproach themselves with but the happiness they have given! My friend, I have taken all I have of any value to *my uncle's*; I have nothing but the memory of you left, and here is the winter coming on. I shall be fireless when it turns cold; for the boulevards are to play only melodramas, in which I have nothing but little bits of parts which don't *pose* a woman. How could you so misunderstand the nobleness of my feelings for you? — for there are two ways

of expressing gratitude. You who seemed so happy in seeing me well-off, how can you leave me in poverty? Oh, my sole friend on earth, before I go back to the country fairs with Bouthor's circus, where I can at least make a living, forgive me if I wish to know whether I have lost you forever. If I were to let myself think of you when I jump through the hoops, I should be sure to break my legs by losing *a time*. Whatever may be the result, I am yours for life.

“MARGUERITE TURQUET.”

“That letter,” thought Thaddeus, shouting with laughter, “is worth the ten thousand francs I have spent upon her.”

III.

CLÉMENTINE came home the next day, and the day after that Paz beheld her again, more beautiful and graceful than ever. After dinner, during which the countess treated Paz with an air of perfect indifference, a little scene took place in the salon between the count and his wife when Thaddeus had left them. On pretence of asking Adam's advice, Thaddeus had left Malaga's letter with him, as if by mistake.

"Poor Thaddeus!" said Adam, as Paz disappeared, "what a misfortune for a man of his distinction to be the plaything of the lowest kind of circus-rider. He will lose everything, and get lower and lower, and won't be recognizable before long. Here, read that," added the count, giving Malaga's letter to his wife.

Clémentine read the letter, which smelt of tobacco, and threw it from her with a look of disgust.

"Thick as the bandage is over his eyes," continued Adam, "he must have found out something; Malaga tricked him, no doubt."

"But he goes back to her," said Clémentine, "and he will forgive her! It is for such horrible women as that that you men have indulgence."

“ Well, they need it,” said Adam.

“ Thaddeus used to show some decency — in living apart from us,” she remarked. “ He had better go away altogether.”

“ Oh, my dear angel, that’s going too far,” said the count, who did not want the death of the sinner.

Paz, who knew Adam thoroughly, had enjoined him to secrecy, pretending to excuse his dissipations, and had asked his friend to lend him a few thousand francs for Malaga.

“ He is a very firm fellow,” said Adam.

“ How so ? ” asked Clémentine.

“ Why, for having spent no more than ten thousand francs on her, and letting her send him that letter before he would ask me for enough to pay her debts. For a Pole. I call that firm.”

“ He will ruin you,” said Clémentine, in the sharp tone of a Parisian woman, when she shows her feline distrusts.

“ Oh, I know him,” said Adam : “ he will sacrifice Malaga, if I ask him.”

“ We shall see,” remarked the countess.

“ If it is best for his own happiness, I sha’n’t hesitate to ask him to leave her. Constantin says that since Paz has been with her he, sober as he is, has sometimes come home quite excited. If he takes to intoxication I shall be just as grieved as if he were my own son.”

“Don’t tell me anything more about it,” cried the countess, with a gesture of disgust.

Two days later the captain perceived in the manner, the tones of voice, but, above all, in the eyes of the countess, the terrible results of Adam’s confidences. Contempt had opened a gulf between the beloved woman and himself. He was suddenly plunged into the deepest distress of mind, for the thought gnawed him, “I have myself made her despise me!” His own folly stared him in the face. Life then became a burden to him, the very sun turned gray. And yet, amid all these bitter thoughts, he found again some moments of pure joy. There were times when he could give himself up wholly to his admiration for his mistress, who paid not the slightest attention to him. Hanging about in corners at her parties and receptions, silent, all heart and eyes, he never lost one of her attitudes, nor a tone of her voice when she sang. He lived in her life; he groomed the horse which *she* rode, he studied the ways and means of that splendid establishment, to the interests of which he was now more devoted than ever. These silent pleasures were buried in his heart like those of a mother, whose heart a child never knows; for is it knowing anything unless we know all? His love was more perfect than the love of Petrarch for Laura, which found its ultimate reward in the treasures of fame, the triumph of the poem which

she had inspired. Surely the emotion that the Chevalier d'Assas felt in dying must have been to him a lifetime of joy. Such emotions as these Paz enjoyed daily, — without dying, but also without the guerdon of immortality.

But what is Love, that, in spite of all these ineffable delights, Paz should still have been unhappy? The Catholic religion has so magnified Love that she has wedded it indissolubly to respect and nobility of spirit. Love is therefore attended by those sentiments and qualities of which mankind is proud; it is rare to find true Love existing where contempt is felt. Thaddeus was suffering from the wounds his own hand had given him. The trial of his former life, when he lived beside his mistress, unknown, unappreciated, but generously working for her, was better than this. Yes, he wanted the reward of his virtue, her respect, and he had lost it. He grew thin and yellow, and so ill with constant low fever that during the month of January he was obliged to keep his bed, though he refused to see a doctor. Comte Adam became very uneasy about him; but the countess had the cruelty to remark: "Let him alone; don't you see it is only some Olympian trouble?" This remark, being repeated to Thaddeus, gave him the courage of despair; he left his bed, went out, tried a few amusements, and recovered his health.

About the end of February Adam lost a large sum of money at the Jockey-Club, and as he was afraid of

his wife, he begged Thaddeus to let the sum appear in the accounts as if he had spent it on Malaga.

“There’s nothing surprising in your spending that sum on the girl; but if the countess finds out that I have lost it at cards I shall be lowered in her opinion, and she will always be suspicious in future.”

“Ha! this, too!” exclaimed Thaddeus, with a sigh.

“Now, Thaddeus, if you will do me this service we shall be forever quits,—though, indeed, I am your debtor now.”

“Adam, you will have children; don’t gamble any more,” said Paz.

“So Malaga has cost us another twenty thousand francs,” cried the countess, some time later, when she discovered this new generosity to Paz. “First, ten thousand, now twenty more, — thirty thousand! the income of which is fifteen hundred! the cost of my box at the Opera, and the whole fortune of many a bourgeois. Oh, you Poles!” she said, gathering some flowers in her greenhouse; “you are really incomprehensible. Why are you not furious with him?”

“Poor Paz is — ”

“Poor Paz, poor Paz, indeed!” she cried, interrupting him, “what good does he do us? I shall take the management of the household myself. You can give him the allowance he refused, and let him settle it as he likes with his Circus.”

“He is very useful to us, Clémentine. He has certainly saved over forty thousand francs this last year. And besides, my dear angel, he has managed to put a hundred thousand with Nucingen, which a steward would have pocketed.”

Clémentine softened down; but she was none the less hard in her feelings to Thaddeus. A few days later, she requested him to come to that boudoir where, one year earlier, she had been surprised into comparing him with her husband. This time she received him alone, without perceiving the slightest danger in so doing.

“My dear Paz,” she said, with the condescending familiarity of the great to their inferiors, “if you love Adam as you say you do, you will do a thing which he will not ask of you, but which I, his wife, do not hesitate to exact.”

“About Malaga?” said Thaddeus, with bitterness in his heart.

“Well, yes,” she said; “if you wish to end your days in this house and continue good friends with us, you must give her up. How an old soldier — ” *

“I am only thirty-five, and have n’t a white hair.”

“You look old,” she said, “and that’s the same thing. How so careful a manager, so distinguished a — ”

The horrible part of all this was her evident inten-

tion to rouse a sense of honor in his soul which she thought extinct.

“—so distinguished a man as you are, Thaddeus,” she resumed after a momentary pause which a gesture of his hand had led her to make, “can allow yourself to be caught like a boy! Your proceedings have made that woman celebrated. My uncle wanted to see her, and he did see her. My uncle is not the only one; Malaga receives a great many gentlemen. I did think you had a noble soul. For shame! Will she be such a loss that you can’t replace her?”

“Madame, if I knew any sacrifice I could make to recover your esteem I would make it; but to give up Malaga is not one —”

“In your position, that is what I should say myself, if I were a man,” replied Clémentine. “Well, if I accept it as a great sacrifice there can be no ill-will between us.”

Paz left the room, fearing he might commit some great folly, and feeling that wild ideas were getting the better of him. He went to walk in the open air, lightly dressed in spite of the cold, but without being able to cool the fire in his cheeks or on his brow.

“I thought you had a noble soul,” — the words still rang in his ears.

“A year ago,” he said to himself, “she thought me a hero who could fight the Russians single-handed!”

He thought of leaving the hôtel Laginski, and taking service with the spahis and getting killed in Africa, but the same great fear checked him. "Without me," he thought, "what would become of them? they would soon be ruined. Poor countess! what a horrible life it would be for her if she were reduced to even thirty thousand francs a year. No, since all is lost for me in this world, — courage! I will keep on as I am."

Every one knows that since 1830 the carnival in Paris has undergone a transformation which has made it European, and far more burlesque and otherwise lively than the late Carnival of Venice. Is it that the diminishing fortunes of the present time have led Parisians to invent a way of amusing themselves collectively, as for instance at their clubs, where they hold salons without hostesses and without manners, but very cheaply? However this may be, the month of March was prodigal of balls, at which dancing, joking, coarse fun, excitement, grotesque figures, and the sharp satire of Parisian wit, produced extravagant effects. These carnival follies had their special Pandemonium in the rue Saint-Honoré and their Napoleon in Musard, a small man born expressly to lead an orchestra as noisy as the disorderly audience, and to set the time for the galop, that witches' dance, which was one of Auber's triumphs, for it did not really take form or poesy till the grand galop in "Gustave" was given to the world.

That tremendous finale might serve as the symbol of an epoch in which for the last fifty years all things have hurried by with the rapidity of a dream.

Now, it happened that the grave Thaddeus, with one divine and immaculate image in his heart, proposed to Malaga, the queen of the carnival dances, to spend an evening at the Musard ball ; because he knew the countess, disguised to the teeth, intended to come there with two friends, all three accompanied by their husbands, and look on at the curious spectacle of one of these crowded balls.

On Shrove Tuesday, of the year 1838, at four o'clock in the morning, the countess, wrapped in a black domino and sitting on the lower step of the platform in the Babylonian hall, where Valentino has since then given his concerts, beheld Thaddeus, as Robert Macaire, threading the galop with Malaga in the dress of a savage, her head garnished with plumes like the horse of a hearse, and bounding through the crowd like a will-o-the-wisp.

“ Ah ! ” said Clémentine to her husband, “ you Poles have no honor at all ! I did believe in Thaddeus. He gave me his word that he would leave that woman ; he did not know that I should be here, seeing all unseen.”

A few days later she requested Paz to dine with them. After dinner Adam left them alone together, and Clémentine reproved Paz and let him know very

plainly that she did not wish him to live in her house any longer.

“Yes, madame,” said Paz, humbly, “you are right; I am a wretch; I did give you my word. But you see how it is; I put off leaving Malaga till after the carnival. Besides, that woman exerts an influence over me which — ”

“An influence! — a woman who ought to be turned out of Musard’s by the police for such dancing!”

“I agree to all that; I accept the condemnation and I’ll leave your house. But you know Adam. If I give up the management of your property you must show energy yourself. I may have been to blame about Malaga, but I have taken the whole charge of your affairs, managed your servants, and looked after the very least details. I cannot leave you until I see you prepared to continue my management. You have now been married three years, and you are safe from the temptations to extravagance which come with the honeymoon. I see that Parisian women, and even titled ones, do manage both their fortunes and their households. Well, as soon as I am certain not so much of your capacity as of your perseverance I shall leave Paris.”

“It is Thaddeus of Warsaw, and not that Circus Thaddeus who speaks now,” said Clémentine. “Go, and come back cured.”

"Cured! never," said Paz, his eyes lowered and fixed on Clémentine's pretty feet. "You do not know, countess, what charm, what unexpected piquancy of mind she has." Then, feeling his courage fail him, he added hastily, "There is not a woman in society, with her mincing airs, that is worth the honest nature of that young animal."

"At any rate, I wish nothing of the animal about me," said the countess, with a glance like that of an angry viper.

After that evening Comte Paz showed Clémentine the exact state of her affairs; he made himself her tutor, taught her the methods and difficulties of the management of property, the proper prices to pay for things, and how to avoid being cheated by her servants. He told her she could rely on Constantin and make him her major-domo. Thaddeus had trained the man thoroughly. By the end of May he thought the countess fully competent to carry on her affairs alone; for Clémentine was one of those far-sighted women, full of instinct, who have an innate genius as mistress of a household.

This position of affairs, which Thaddeus had led up to naturally, did not end without further cruel trials; his sufferings were fated not to be as sweet and tender as he was trying to make them. The poor lover forgot

to reckon on the hazard of events. Adam fell seriously ill, and Thaddeus, instead of leaving the house, stayed to nurse his friend. His devotion was unweariel. A woman who had any interest in employing her perspicacity might have seen in this devotion a sort of punishment imposed by a noble soul to repress an involuntary evil thought; but women see all, or see nothing, according to the condition of their souls—love is their sole illuminator.

During forty-five days Paz watched and tended Adam without appearing to think of Malaga, for the very good reason that he never did think of her. Clémentine, feeling that Adam was at the point of death though still he did not die, sent for all the leading doctors of Paris in consultation.

“If he comes safely out of this,” said the most distinguished of them all, “it will only be by an effort of nature. It is for those who nurse him to watch for the moment when they must second nature. The count’s life is in the hands of his nurses.”

Thaddeus went to find Clémentine and tell her this result of the consultation. He found her sitting in the Chinese pavilion, as much for a little rest as to leave the field to the doctors and not embarrass them. As he walked along the winding gravelled path which led to the pavilion, Thaddeus seemed to himself in the depths of an abyss described by Dante. The unfortunate man

had never dreamed that the possibility might arise of becoming Clémentine's husband, and now he had drowned himself in a ditch of mud. His face was convulsed, when he reached the kiosk, with an agony of grief; his head, like Medusa's, conveyed despair.

"Is he dead?" said Clémentine.

"They have given him up; that is, they leave him to nature. Do not go in; they are still there, and Bianchon is changing the dressings."

"Poor Adam! I ask myself if I have not sometimes pained him," she said.

"You have made him very happy," said Thaddeus; "you ought to be easy on that score, for you have shown every indulgence for him."

"My loss would be irreparable."

"But, dear, you judged him justly."

"I was never blind to his faults," she said, "but I loved him as a wife should love her husband."

"Then you ought, in case you lose him," said Thaddeus, in a voice which Clémentine had never heard him use, "to grieve for him less than if you lost a man who was your pride, your love, and all your life, — as some men are to you women. Surely you can be frank at this moment with a friend like me. I shall grieve, too; long before your marriage I had made him my child, I had sacrificed my life to him. If he dies I shall be without an interest on earth; but life is still beautiful to a widow of twenty-four."

“ Ah ! but you know that I love no one,” she said, with the impatience of grief.

“ You don’t yet know what it is to love,” said Thaddeus.

“ Oh, as husbands are, I have sense enough to prefer a child like my poor Adam to a superior man. It is now over a month that we have been saying to each other, ‘ Will he live?’ and these alternations have prepared me, as they have you, for this loss. I can be frank with you. Well, I would give my life to save Adam. What is a woman’s independence in Paris? the freedom to let herself be taken in by ruined or dissipated men who pretend to love her. I pray to God to leave me this husband who is so kind, so obliging, so little fault-finding, and who is beginning to stand in awe of me.”

“ You are honest, and I love you the better for it,” said Thaddeus, taking her hand, which she yielded to him, and kissing it. “ In solemn moments like these there is unspeakable satisfaction in finding a woman without hypocrisy. It is possible to converse with you. Let us look at the future. Suppose that God does not grant your prayer, — and no one cries to him more than I do, ‘ Leave me my friend!’ Yes, these fifty nights have not weakened me ; if thirty more days and nights are needed I can give them while you sleep, — yes, I will tear him from death if, as the doctors say,

nursing can save him. But suppose that in spite of you and me, the count dies, — well, then, if you were loved, oh, adored, by a man of a heart and soul that are worthy of you — ”

“ I may have wished for such love, foolishly, but I have never met with it.”

“ Perhaps you are mistaken — ”

Clémentine looked fixedly at Thaddeus, imagining that there was less of love than of cupidity in his thoughts ; her eyes measured him from head to foot and poured contempt upon him ; then she crushed him with the words, “ Poor Malaga ! ” uttered in tones which a great lady alone can find to give expression to her disdain. She rose, leaving Thaddeus half unconscious behind her, slowly re-entered her boudoir, and went back to Adam’s chamber.

An hour later Paz returned to the sick-room, and began anew, with death in his heart, his care of the count. From that moment he said nothing. He was forced to struggle with the patient, whom he managed in a way that excited the admiration of the doctors. At all hours his watchful eyes were like lamps always lighted. He showed no resentment to Clémentine, and listened to her thanks without accepting them ; he seemed both dumb and deaf. To himself he was saying, “ She shall owe his life to me,” and he wrote the thought as it were in letters of fire on the walls of

Adam's room. On the fifteenth day Clémentine was forced to give up the nursing, lest she should utterly break down. Paz was unwearied. At last, towards the end of August, Bianchon, the family physician, told Clémentine that Adam was out of danger.

“Ah, madame, you are under no obligation to me,” he said; “without his friend, Comte Paz, we could not have saved him.”

The day after the meeting of Paz and Clémentine in the kiosk, the Marquis de Ronquerolles came to see his nephew. He was on the eve of starting for Russia on a secret diplomatic mission. Paz took occasion to say a few words to him. The first day that Adam was able to drive out with his wife and Thaddeus, a gendarme entered the courtyard as the carriage was about to leave it, and asked for Comte Paz. Thaddeus, who was sitting on the front seat of the calèche, turned to take a letter which bore the stamp of the ministry of Foreign affairs. Having read it, he put it into his pocket with a manner which prevented Clémentine or Adam from speaking of it. Nevertheless, by the time they reached the porte Maillot, Adam, full of curiosity, used the privilege of a sick man whose caprices are to be gratified, and said to Thaddeus: “There's no indiscretion between brothers who love each other, — tell me what there is in that despatch; I'm in a fever of curiosity.”

Clémentine glanced at Thaddeus with a vexed air, and remarked to her husband: "He has been so sulky with me for the last two months that I shall never ask him anything again."

"Oh, as for that," replied Paz, "I can't keep it out of the newspapers, so I may as well tell you at once. The Emperor Nicholas has had the grace to appoint me captain in a regiment which is to take part in the expedition to Khiva."

"You are not going?" cried Adam.

"Yes, I shall go, my dear fellow. Captain I came, and captain I return. We shall dine together to-morrow for the last time. If I don't start at once for St. Petersburg I shall have to make the journey by land, and I am not rich, and I must leave Malaga a little independence. I ought to think of the only woman who has been able to understand me; she thinks me grand, superior. I dare say she is faithless, but she would jump —"

"Through the hoop, for your sake and come down safely on the back of her horse," said Clémentine, sharply.

"Oh, you don't know Malaga," said the captain, bitterly, with a sarcastic look in his eyes which made Clémentine thoughtful and uneasy.

"Good-by to the young trees of this beautiful Bois, which you Parisians love, and the exiles who find a

home here love too," he said, presently. "My eyes will never again see the evergreens of the avenue de Mademoiselle, nor the acacias nor the cedars of the *rond-points*. On the borders of Asia, fighting for the Emperor, promoted to the command, perhaps, by force of courage and by risking my life, it may happen that I shall regret these Champs-Élysées where I have driven beside you, and where you pass. Yes, I shall grieve for Malaga's hardness — the Malaga of whom I am now speaking."

This was said in a manner that made Clémentine tremble.

"Then you do love Malaga very much?" she asked.

"I have sacrificed for her the honor that no man should ever sacrifice."

"What honor?"

"That which we desire to keep at any cost in the eyes of our idol."

After that reply Thaddeus said no more; he was silent until, as they passed a wooden building on the Champs Élysées, he said, pointing to it, "That is the Circus."

He went to the Russian Embassy before dinner, and thence to the Foreign office, and the next morning he had started for Havre before the count and countess were up.

"I have lost a friend," said Adam, with tears in his

eyes, when he heard that Paz had gone, — “ a friend in the true meaning of the word. I don’t know what has made him abandon me as if a pestilence were in my house. We are not friends to quarrel about a woman,” he said, looking intently at Clémentine. “ You heard what he said yesterday about Malaga. Well, he has never so much as touched the little finger of that girl.”

“ How do you know that ? ” said Clémentine.

“ I had the natural curiosity to go and see *Maiselle Turquet*, and the poor girl can’t explain even to herself the absolute reserve which Thad — ”

“ Enough ! ” said the countess, retreating into her bedroom. “ Can it be that I am the victim of some noble mystification ? ” she asked herself. The thought had scarcely crossed her mind when Constantin brought her the following letter written by Thaddeus during the night : —

“ *COUNTESS*, — To seek death in the Caucasus and carry with me your contempt is more than I can bear. A man should die untainted. When I saw you for the first time I loved you as we love a woman whom we shall love forever, even though she be unfaithful to us. I loved you thus, — I, the friend of the man you had chosen and were about to marry ; I, poor ; I, the steward, — a voluntary service, but still the steward of your household.

“In this immense misfortune I found a happy life. To be to you an indispensable machine, to know myself useful to your comfort, your luxury, has been the source of deep enjoyments. If these enjoyments were great when I thought only of Adam, think what they were to my soul when the woman I loved was the mainspring of all I did. I have known the pleasures of maternity in my love. I accepted life thus. Like the paupers who live along the great highways, I built myself a hut on the borders of your beautiful domain, though I never sought to approach you. Poor and lonely, struck blind by Adam’s good fortune, I was, nevertheless, the giver. Yes, you were surrounded by a love pure as a guardian-angel’s; it waked while you slept; it caressed you with a look as you passed; it was happy in its own existence, — you were the sun of my native land to me, poor exile, who now writes to you with tears in his eyes as he thinks of the happiness of those first days.

“When I was eighteen years old, having no one to love, I took for my ideal mistress a charming woman in Warsaw, to whom I confided all my thoughts, my wishes; I made her the queen of my nights and days. She knew nothing of all this; why should she? I loved my love.

“You can fancy from this incident of my youth how happy I was merely to live in the sphere of your exist-

ence, to groom your horse, to find the new-coined gold for your purse, to prepare the splendor of your dinners and your balls, to see you eclipsing the elegance of those whose fortunes were greater than yours, and all by my own good management. Ah! with what ardor I have ransacked Paris when Adam would say to me, '*She* wants this or that.' It was a joy such as I can never express to you. You wished for a trifle at one time which kept me seven hours in a cab scouring the city; and what delight it was to weary myself for you. Ah! when I saw you, unseen by you, smiling among your flowers, I could forget that no one loved me. On certain days, when my happiness turned my head, I went at night and kissed the spot where, to me, your feet had left their luminous traces. The air you had breathed was balmy; in it I breathed in more of life; I inhaled, as they say persons do in the tropics, a vapor laden with creative principles.

"I *must* tell you these things to explain the strange presumption of my involuntary thoughts, — I would have died rather than avow it until now.

"You will remember those few days of curiosity when you wished to know the man who performed the household miracles you had sometimes noticed. I thought, — forgive me, madame, — I believed you might love me. Your good-will, your glances interpreted by me, a lover, seemed to me so dangerous — for me —

that I invented that story of Malaga, knowing it was the sort of liaison which women cannot forgive. I did it in a moment when I felt that my love would be communicated, fatally, to you. Despise me, crush me with the contempt you have so often cast upon me when I did not deserve it; and yet I am certain that, if, on that evening when your aunt took Adam away from you, I had said what I have now written to you, I should, like the tamed tiger that sets his teeth once more in living flesh, and scents the blood, and —

“Midnight.

“I could not go on; the memory of that hour is still too living. Yes, I was maddened. Was there hope for me in your eyes? then victory with its scarlet banners would have flamed in mine and fascinated yours. My crime has been to think all this; perhaps wrongly. You alone can judge of that dreadful scene when I drove back love, desire, all the most invincible forces of our manhood, with the cold hand of gratitude, — gratitude which must be eternal.

“Your terrible contempt has been my punishment. You have shown me there is no return from loathing or disdain. I love you madly. I should have gone had Adam died; all the more must I go because he lives. A man does not tear his friend from the arms of death to betray him. Besides, my going is my punishment for the thought that came to me that I would

let him die, when the doctors said that his life depended on his nursing.

“Adieu, madame; in leaving Paris I lose all, but you lose nothing now in my being no longer near you.

“Your devoted

“THADDEUS PAZ.”

“If my poor Adam says he has lost a friend, what have I lost?” thought Clémentine, sinking into a chair with her eyes fixed on the carpet.

The following letter Constantin had orders to give privately to the count: —

“MY DEAR ADAM, — Malaga has told me all. In the name of all your future happiness, never let a word escape you to Clémentine about your visits to that girl; let her think that Malaga has cost me a hundred thousand francs. I know Clémentine’s character; she will never forgive either your losses at cards or your visits to Malaga.

“I am not going to Khiva, but to the Caucasus. I have the spleen; and at the pace at which I mean to go I shall be either Prince Paz in three years, or dead. Good-by; though I have taken sixty thousand francs from Nucingen, our accounts are even.

“THADDEUS.”

“Idiot that I was,” thought Adam; “I came near cutting my throat just now, talking about Malaga.”

It is now three years since Paz went away. The newspapers have as yet said nothing about any Prince Paz. The Comtesse Laginska is immensely interested in the expeditions of the Emperor Nicholas; she is Russian to the core, and reads with a sort of avidity all the news that comes from that distant land. Once or twice every winter she says to the Russian ambassador, with an air of indifference, "Do you know what has become of our poor Comte Paz?"

Alas! most Parisian women, those beings who think themselves so clever and clear-sighted, pass and repass beside a Paz and never recognize him. Yes, many a Paz is unknown and misconceived, but — horrible to think of! — some are misconceived even though they are loved. The simplest women in society exact a certain amount of conventional sham from the greatest men. A noble love signifies nothing to them if rough and unpolished; it needs the cutting and setting of a jeweller to give it value in their eyes.

In January, 1842, the Comtesse Laginska, with her charm of gentle melancholy, inspired a violent passion in the Comte de La Palférine, one of the most daring and presumptuous lions of the day. La Palférine was well aware that the conquest of a woman so guarded by reserve as the Comtesse Laginska was difficult, but he thought he could inveigle this charming creature into committing herself if he took her unawares, by

the assistance of a certain friend of her own, a woman already jealous of her.

Quite incapable, in spite of her intelligence, of suspecting such treachery, the Comtesse Laginska committed the imprudence of going with her so-called friend to a masked ball at the Opera. About three in the morning, led away by the excitement of the scene, Clémentine, on whom La Palférine had expended his seductions, consented to accept a supper, and was about to enter the carriage of her faithless friend. At this critical moment her arm was grasped by a powerful hand, and she was taken, in spite of her struggles, to her own carriage, the door of which stood open, though she did not know it was there.

“ He has never left Paris ! ” she exclaimed to herself as she recognized Thaddeus, who disappeared when the carriage drove away.

Did any woman ever have a like romance in her life? Clémentine is constantly hoping she may again see Paz.

MADAME FIRMIANI.

MADAME FIRMIANI.

TO MY DEAR ALEXANDRE DE BERNY.

HIS OLD FRIEND,

DE BALZAC.

MANY tales, either rich in situations or made dramatic by some of the innumerable tricks of chance, carry with them their own particular setting, which can be rendered artistically or simply by those who narrate them, without their subjects losing any, even the least of their charms. But there are some incidents in human experience to which the heart alone is able to give life; there are certain details — shall we call them anatomical? — the delicate touches of which cannot be made to reappear unless by an equally delicate rendering of thought; there are portraits which require the infusion of a soul, and mean nothing unless the subtlest expression of the speaking countenance is given; furthermore, there are things which we know not how to say or do without the aid of secret harmonies which a day, an hour, a fortunate conjunction of

celestial signs, or an inward moral tendency may produce.

Such mysterious revelations are imperatively needed in order to tell this simple history, in which we seek to interest those souls that are naturally grave and reflective and find their sustenance in tender emotions. If the writer, like the surgeon beside his dying friend, is filled with a species of reverence for the subject he is handling, should not the reader share in that inexplicable feeling? Is it so difficult to put ourselves in unison with the vague and nervous sadness which casts its gray tints all about us, and is, in fact, a semi-illness, the gentle sufferings of which are often pleasing? If the reader is of those who sometimes think upon the dear ones they have lost, if he is alone, if the day is waning or the night has come, let him read on; otherwise, he should lay aside this book at once. If he has never buried a good old relative, infirm and poor, he will not understand these pages, which to some will seem redolent of musk, to others as colorless and virtuous as those of Florian. In short, the reader must have known the luxury of tears, must have felt the silent pangs of a passing memory, the vision of a dear yet far-off Shade, — memories which bring regret for all that earth has swallowed up, with smiles for vanished joys.

And now, believe that the writer would not, for the

wealth of England, steal from poesy a single lie with which to embellish this narrative. The following is a true history, on which you may safely spend the treasures of your sensibility — if you have any.

In these days the French language has as many idioms and represents as many idiosyncracies as there are varieties of men in the great family of France. It is extremely curious and amusing to listen to the different interpretations or versions of the same thing or the same event by the various species which compose the genus Parisian, — “Parisian” is here used merely to generalize our remark.

Therefore, if you should say to an individual of the species Practical, “Do you know Madame Firmiani?” he would present that lady to your mind by the following inventory: “Fine house in the rue du Bac, salons handsomely furnished, good pictures, one hundred thousand francs a year, husband formerly receiver-general of the department of Montenotte.” So saying, the Practical man, rotund and fat and usually dressed in black, will project his lower lip and wrap it over the upper, nodding his head as if to add: “Solid people, those; nothing to be said against them.” Ask no further; Practical men settle everybody’s status by figures, incomes, or solid acres, — a phrase of their lexicon.

Turn to the right, and put the same question to that

other man, who belongs to the species Lounger. “Madame Firmiani?” he says; “yes, yes, I know her well; I go to her parties; receives Wednesdays; highly creditable house.” — Madame Firmiani is metamorphosed into a house! but the house is not a pile of stones architecturally superposed, of course not, the word presents in Lounger’s language an indescribable idiom. — Here the Lounger, a spare man with an agreeable smile, a sayer of pretty nothings with more acquired cleverness than native wit, stoops to your ear and adds, with a shrewd glance: “I have never seen Monsieur Firmiani. His social position is that of looking after property in Italy. Madame Firmiani is a Frenchwoman, and spends her money like a Parisian. She has excellent tea. It is one of the few houses where you can amuse yourself; the refreshments are exquisite. It is very difficult to get admitted; therefore, of course, one meets only the best society in her salons.” Here the Lounger takes a pinch of snuff; he inhales it slowly and seems to say: “I go there, but don’t expect me to present *you*.”

Evidently the Lounger considers that Madame Firmiani keeps a sort of inn, without a sign.

“Why do you want to know Madame Firmiani? Her parties are as dull as the Court itself. What is the good of possessing a mind unless to avoid such salons, where stupid talk and foolish little ballads are

the order of the day." You have questioned a being classed Egotist, a species who would like to keep the universe under lock and key, and let nothing be done without their permission. They are unhappy if others are happy; they forgive nothing but vices, downfalls, frailties, and like none but protégés. Aristocrats by inclination, they make themselves democrats out of spite, preferring to consort with inferiors as equals.

"Oh, Madame Firmiani, my dear fellow! she is one of those adorable women who serve as Nature's excuse for all the ugly ones she creates. Madame Firmiani is enchanting, and so kind! I wish I were in power and possessed millions that I might—" (here a whisper). "Shall I present you?" The speaker is a youth of the Student species, known for his boldness among men and his timidity in a boudoir.

"Madame Firmiani?" cries another, twirling his cane. "I'll tell you what I think of her; she is a woman between thirty and thirty-five; faded complexion, handsome eyes, flat figure, contralto voice worn out, much dressed, rather rouged, charming manners; in short, my dear fellow, the remains of a pretty woman who is still worth the trouble of a passion." This remark is from the species Fop, who has just breakfasted, does n't weigh his words, and is about to mount his horse. At that particular moment Fops are pitiless.

"Magnificent collection of pictures in her house;

go and see them by all means," answers another. "Nothing finer." You have questioned one of the species Connoisseur. He leaves you to go to Pérignon's or Tripet's. To him, Madame Firmiani is a collection of painted canvases.

A WOMAN: "Madame Firmiani? I don't wish you to visit her." This remark is rich in meanings. Madame Firmiani! dangerous woman! a siren! dresses well, has taste; gives other women sleepless nights. Your informant belongs to the genus Spiteful.

AN ATTACHÉ TO AN EMBASSY: "Madame Firmiani? Is n't she from Antwerp? I saw her ten years ago in Rome; she was very handsome then." Individuals of the species Attaché have a mania for talking in the style of Talleyrand. Their wit is often so refined that the point is imperceptible; they are like billiard-players who avoid hitting a ball with consummate dexterity. These individuals are usually taciturn, and when they talk it is only about Spain, Vienna, Italy, or Petersburg. Names of countries act like springs in their mind; press them, and the ringing of their changes begins.

"That Madame Firmiani sees a great deal of the faubourg Saint-Germain, does n't she?" This from a person who desires to belong to the class Distinguished. She gives the *de* to everybody, — to Monsieur Dupin senior, to Monsieur Lafayette; she flings it right and left and humiliates many. This woman spends her life

in striving to know and do "the right thing;" but, for her sins, she lives in the Marais, and her husband is a lawyer, — a lawyer before the Royal courts, however.

"Madame Firmiani, monsieur? I do not know her." This man belongs to the species Duke. He recognizes none but the women who have been presented at court. Pray excuse him, he was one of Napoleon's creations.

"Madame Firmiani? surely she used to sing at the Opera-house." Species Ninny. The individuals of this species have an answer for everything. They will tell lies sooner than say nothing.

TWO OLD LADIES, wives of former magistrates: *The First* (wears a cap with bows, her face is wrinkled, her nose sharp, voice hard, carries a prayer-book in her hand): "What was that Madame Firmiani's maiden name?" — *The Second* (small face red as a crab-apple, gentle voice): "She was a Cadignan, my dear, niece of the old Prince de Cadignan, consequently cousin to the present Duc de Maufrigneuse."

Madame Firmiani is a Cadignan. She might have neither virtue, nor wealth, nor youth, but she would still be a Cadignan; it is like a prejudice, always alive and working.

AN ORIGINAL: "My dear fellow, I've seen no galoshes in her antechamber; consequently you can visit her without compromising yourself, and play cards there without fear; if there *are* any scoundrels in her salons,

they are people of quality and come in their carriages ; such persons never quarrel."

OLD MAN BELONGING TO THE GENUS OBSERVER : " If you call on Madame Firmiani, my good friend, you will find a beautiful woman sitting at her ease by the corner of her fireplace. She will scarcely rise to receive you, — she only does that for women, ambassadors, dukes, and persons of great distinction. She is very gracious, she possesses charm ; she converses well, and likes to talk on many topics. There are many indications of a passionate nature about her ; but she has, evidently, so many adorers that she cannot have a favorite. If suspicion rested on two or three of her intimates, we might say that one or other of them was the *cavaliere servente* ; but it does not. The lady is a mystery. She is married, though none of us have seen her husband. Monsieur Firmiani is altogether mythical ; he is like that third post-horse for which we pay though we never behold it. Madame has the finest contralto voice in Europe, so say judges ; but she has never been heard to sing more than two or three times since she came to Paris. She receives much company, but goes nowhere."

The Observer speaks, you will notice, as an Oracle. His words, anecdotes, and quotations must be accepted as truths, under pain of being thought without social education or intelligence, and of causing him to slander

you with much zest in twenty salons where he is considered indispensable. The Observer is forty years of age, never dines at home, declares himself no longer dangerous to women, wears a maroon coat, and has a place reserved for him in several boxes at the "Bouffons." He is sometimes confounded with the Parasite; but he has filled too many real functions to be thought a sponger; moreover he possesses a small estate in a certain department, the name of which he has never been known to utter.

"Madame Firmiani? why, my dear fellow, she was Murat's former mistress." This man belongs to the Contradictors, — persons who note errata in memoirs, rectify dates, correct facts, bet a hundred to one, and are certain about everything. You can easily detect them in some gross blunder in the course of a single evening. They will tell you they were in Paris at the time of Mallet's conspiracy, forgetting that half an hour earlier they had described how they crossed the Bérésina. Nearly all Contradictors are *chevaliers* of the Legion of honor; they talk loudly, have retreating foreheads, and play high.

"Madame Firmiani a hundred thousand francs a year? nonsense, you are crazy! Some people will persist in giving millions with the liberality of authors, to whom it does n't cost a penny to dower their heroines. Madame Firmiani is simply a coquette, who has

lately ruined a young man, and now prevents him from making a fine marriage. If she were not so handsome she would n't have a penny."

Ah, *that one* — of course you recognize him — belongs to the species Envious. There is no need to sketch him; the species is as well known as that of the *felis domestica*. But how explain the perennial vigor of envy? — a vice that brings nothing in!

Persons in society, literary men, honest folk, — in short, individuals of all species, — were promulgating in the month of January, 1824, so many different opinions about Madame Firmiani that it would be tedious to write them down. We have merely sought to show that a man seeking to understand her, yet unwilling or unable to go to her house, would (from the answers to his inquiries) have had equal reason to suppose her a widow or wife, silly or wise, virtuous or the reverse, rich or poor, soulless or full of feeling, handsome or plain, — in short, there were as many Madame Firmianis as there are species in society, or sects in catholicism. Frightful reflection! we are all like lithographic blocks, from which an indefinite number of copies can be drawn by criticism, — the proofs being more or less like us according to a distribution of shading which is so nearly imperceptible that our reputation depends (barring the calumnies of friends and the witticisms of newspapers) on the balance struck by our

criticisers between Truth that limps and Falsehood to which Parisian wit gives wings.

Madame Firmiani, like other noble and dignified women who make their hearts a sanctuary and disdain the world, was liable, therefore, to be totally misjudged by Monsieur de Bourbonne, an old country magnate, who had reason to think a great deal about her during the winter of this year. He belonged to the class of provincial Planters, men living on their estates, accustomed to keep close accounts of everything and to bargain with the peasantry. Thus employed, a man becomes sagacious in spite of himself, just as soldiers in the long run acquire courage from routine. The old gentleman, who had come to Paris from Touraine to satisfy his curiosity about Madame Firmiani, and found it not at all assuaged by the Parisian gossip which he heard, was a man of honor and breeding. His sole heir was a nephew, whom he greatly loved, in whose interests he planted his poplars. When a man thinks without annoyance about his heir, and watches the trees grow daily finer for his future benefit, affection grows too with every blow of the spade around their roots. Though this phenomenal feeling is not common, it is still to be met with in Touraine.

This cherished nephew, named Octave de Camps, was a descendant of the famous Abbé de Camps so well known to bibliophiles and learned men, — who, by

the bye, are not at all the same thing. People in the provinces have the bad habit of branding with a sort of decent reprobation any young man who sells his inherited estates. This antiquated prejudice has interfered very much with the stock-jobbing which the present government encourages for its own interests. Without consulting his uncle, Octave had lately sold an estate belonging to him to the Black Band.¹ The château de Villaines would have been pulled down were it not for the remonstrances which the old uncle made to the representatives of the "Pickaxe company." To increase the old gentleman's wrath, a distant relative (one of those cousins of small means and much astuteness about whom shrewd provincials are wont to remark, "No lawsuits for me with him!") had, as it were by accident, come to visit Monsieur de Bourbonne, and *incidentally* informed him of his nephew's ruin. Monsieur Octave de Camps, he said, having wasted his means on a certain Madame Firmiani, was now reduced to teaching mathematics for a living, while awaiting his uncle's death, not daring to let him know of his dissipations. This distant cousin, a sort of Charles Moor, was not ashamed to give this fatal news to the old gentleman as he sat by his fire, digesting a profuse provincial dinner.

¹ The *Bande Noire* was a mysterious association of speculators, whose object was to buy in landed estates, cut them up, and sell them off in small parcels to the peasantry, or others.

But heirs cannot always rid themselves of uncles as easily as they would like to. Thanks to his obstinacy, this particular uncle refused to believe the story, and came out victorious from the attack of indigestion produced by his nephew's biography. Some shocks affect the heart, others the head; but in this case the cousin's blow fell on the digestive organs and did little harm, for the old man's stomach was sound. Like a true disciple of Saint Thomas, Monsieur de Bourbonne came to Paris, unknown to Octave, resolved to make full inquiries as to his nephew's insolvency. Having many acquaintances in the faubourg Saint-Germain, among the Listomères, the Lenoncourts, and the Vandenesses, he heard so much gossip, so many facts and falsities, about Madame Firmiani that he resolved to be presented to her under the name of de Rouxellay, that of his estate in Touraine. The astute old gentleman was careful to choose an evening when he knew that Octave would be engaged in finishing a piece of work which was to pay him well, — for this so-called lover of Madame Firmiani still went to her house; a circumstance that seemed difficult to explain. As to Octave's ruin, that, unfortunately, was no fable, as Monsieur de Bourbonne had at once discovered.

Monsieur de Rouxellay was not at all like the provincial uncle at the Gymnase. Formerly in the King's guard, a man of the world and a favorite among women,

he knew how to present himself in society with the courteous manners of the olden time; he could make graceful speeches and understand the whole Charter, or most of it. Though he loved the Bourbons with noble frankness, believed in God as a gentleman should, and read nothing but the "*Quotidienne*," he was not as ridiculous as the liberals of his department would fain have had him. He could hold his own in the court circle, provided no one talked to him of "*Moses in Egypt*," nor of the drama, or romanticism, or local color, nor of railways. He himself had never got beyond Monsieur de Voltaire, Monsieur le Comte de Buffon, Peyronnet, and the Chevalier Glück, the Queen's favorite musician.

"Madame," he said to the Marquise de Listomère, who was on his arm as they entered Madame Firmiani's salons, "if this woman is my nephew's mistress, I pity him. How can she live in the midst of this luxury and know that he is in a garret? Hasn't she any soul? Octave is a fool to have given up such an estate as Villaines for a —"

Monsieur de Bourbonne belonged to the species Fossil, and used the language of the days of yore.

"But suppose he had lost it at play?"

"Then, madame, he would at least have had the pleasure of gambling."

"And do you think he has had no pleasure here? See! look at Madame Firmiani."

The brightest memories of the old man faded at the sight of his nephew's so-called mistress. His anger died away in the gracious exclamation which came from his lips as he looked at her. By one of those fortunate accidents which happen only to pretty women, it was a moment when all her beauties shone with peculiar lustre, due perhaps to the wax-lights, to the charming simplicity of her dress, to the ineffable atmosphere of elegance that surrounded her. One must needs have studied the transitions of an evening in a Parisian salon to appreciate the imperceptible lights and shades which color a woman's face and vary it. There comes a moment when, content with her toilet, pleased by her own wit, delighted to be admired, and feeling herself the queen of a salon full of remarkable men who smile to her, the Parisian woman reaches a full consciousness of her grace and charm ; her beauty is enhanced by the looks she gathers in, — a mute homage which she transfers with subtle glances to the man she loves. At moments like these a woman is invested with supernatural power and becomes a magician, a charmer, without herself knowing that she is one ; involuntarily she inspires the love that fills her own bosom ; her smiles and glances fascinate. If this condition, which comes from the soul, can give attraction even to a plain woman, with what radiance does it not invest a woman of natural elegance, distinguished bearing, fair,

fresh, with speaking eyes, and dressed in a taste that wrings approval from artists and her bitterest rivals.

Have you ever, for your happiness, met a woman whose harmonious voice gives to her speech the same charm that emanates from her manners? a woman who knows how to speak and to be silent, whose words are happily chosen, whose language is pure, and who concerns herself in your interests with delicacy? Her raillery is caressing, her criticism never wounds; she neither discourses nor argues, but she likes to lead a discussion and stop it at the right moment. Her manner is affable and smiling, her politeness never forced, her readiness to serve others never servile; she reduces the respect she claims to a soft shadow; she never wearies you, and you leave her satisfied with her and with yourself. Her charming grace is conveyed to all the things with which she surrounds herself. Everything about her pleases the eye; in her presence you breathe, as it were, your native air. This woman is natural. There is no effort about her; she is aiming at no effect; her feelings are shown simply, because they are true. Frank herself, she does not wound the vanity of others; she accepts men as God made them; pitying the vicious, forgiving defects and absurdities, comprehending all ages, and vexed by nothing, because she has had the sense and tact to foresee all. Tender and gay, she gratifies before she consoles. You love

her so well that if this angel did wrong you would be ready to excuse her. If, for your happiness, you have met with such a woman, you know Madame Firmiani.

After Monsieur de Bourbonne had talked with her for ten minutes, sitting beside her, his nephew was forgiven. He perceived that whatever the actual truth might be, the relation between Madame Firmiani and Octave covered some mystery. Returning to the illusions that gild the days of youth, and judging Madame Firmiani by her beauty, the old gentleman became convinced that a woman so innately conscious of her dignity as she appeared to be was incapable of a bad action. Her dark eyes told of inward peace; the lines of her face were so noble, the profile so pure, and the passion he had come to investigate seemed so little to oppress her heart, that the old man said to himself, while noting all the promises of love and virtue given by that adorable countenance, "My nephew is committing some folly."

Madame Firmiani acknowledged to twenty-five. But the Practicals proved that having married the invisible Firmiani (then a highly respectable individual in the forties) in 1813, at the age of sixteen, she must be at least twenty-eight in 1825. However the same persons also asserted that at no period of her life had she ever been so desirable or so completely a woman. She was now at an age when women are most prone to conceive

a passion, and to desire it, perhaps, in their pensive hours. She possessed all that earth sells, all that it lends, all that it gives. The Attachés declared there was nothing of which she was ignorant; the Contradictors asserted that there was much she ought to learn; the Observers remarked that her hands were white, her feet small, her movements a trifle too undulating. But, nevertheless, individuals of all species envied or disputed Octave's happiness, agreeing, for once in a way, that Madame Firmiani was the most aristocratically beautiful woman in Paris.

Still young, rich, a perfect musician, intelligent, witty, refined, and received (as a Cadignan) by the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry, that oracle of the noble faubourg, loved by her rivals the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse her cousin, the Marquise d'Espard, and Madame de Macumer, — Madame Firmiani gratified all the vanities which feed or excite love. She was therefore sought by too many men not to fall a victim to Parisian malice and its charming calumnies, whispered behind a fan or in a safe aside. It was necessary to quote the remarks given at the beginning of this history to bring out the true Firmiani in contradistinction to the Firmiani of society. If some women forgave her happiness, others did not forgive her propriety. Now nothing is so dangerous in Paris as unfounded suspicions, — for the reason that it is impossible to destroy them.

This sketch of a woman who was admirably natural gives only a faint idea of her. It would need the pencil of an Ingres to render the pride of that brow, with its wealth of hair, the dignity of that glance, and the thoughts betrayed by the changing colors of the cheeks. In her were all things; poets could have found an Agnes Sorel and a Joan of Arc, also the woman unknown, the Soul within that form, the soul of Eve, the knowledge of the treasures of good and the riches of evil, error and resignation, crime and devotion, the Donna Julia and the Haidee of Lord Byron.

The former guardsman stayed, with apparent impertinence, after the other guests had left the salons; and Madame Firmiani found him sitting quietly before her in an armchair, evidently determined to remain, with the pertinacity of a fly which we are forced to kill to get rid of it. The hands of the clock marked two in the morning.

“Madame,” said the old gentleman, as Madame Firmiani rose, hoping to make him understand that it was her good pleasure he should go, “Madame, I am the uncle of Monsieur Octave de Camps.”

Madame Firmiani immediately sat down again, and showed her emotion. In spite of his sagacity the old Planter was unable to decide whether she turned pale from shame or pleasure. There are pleasures, delicious emotions the chaste heart seeks to veil, which cannot es-

cape the shock of startled modesty. The more delicacy a woman has, the more she seeks to hide the joys that are in her soul. Many women, incomprehensible in their tender caprices, long to hear a name pronounced which at other times they desire to bury in their hearts. Monsieur de Bourbonne did not interpret Madame Firmiani's agitation exactly in this way : pray forgive him, all provincials are distrustful.

“ Well, monsieur ? ” said Madame Firmiani, giving him one of those clear, lucid glances in which we men can never see anything because they question us too much.

“ Well, madame,” returned the old man, “ do you know what some one came to tell me in the depths of my province ? That my nephew had ruined himself for you, and that the poor fellow was living in a garret while you were in silk and gold. Forgive my rustic sincerity ; it may be useful for you to know of these calumnies.”

“ Stop, monsieur,” said Madame Firmiani, with an imperative gesture ; “ I know all that. You are too polite to continue this subject if I request you to leave it, and too gallant — in the old-fashioned sense of the word,” she added with a slight tone of irony — “ not to agree that you have no right to question me. It would be ridiculous in me to defend myself. I trust that you will have a sufficiently good opinion of my character to

believe in the profound contempt which, I assure you, I feel for money, — although I was married, without any fortune, to a man of immense wealth. It is nothing to me whether your nephew is rich or poor ; if I have received him in my house, and do now receive him, it is because I consider him worthy to be counted among my friends. All my friends, monsieur, respect each other ; they know that I have not philosophy enough to admit into my house those I do not esteem ; this may argue a want of charity ; but my guardian-angel has maintained in me to this day a profound aversion for tattle, and also for dishonesty.”

Though the ring of her voice was slightly raised during the first part of this answer, the last words were said with the ease and self-possession of Célimène bantering the *Misanthrope*.

“ Madame,” said Monsieur de Bourbonne, in a voice of some emotion, “ I am an old man ; I am almost Octave’s father, and I ask your pardon most humbly for the question that I shall now venture to put to you, giving you my word of honor as a loyal gentleman that your answer shall die here,” — laying his hand upon his heart, with an old-fashioned gesture that was truly religious. “ Are these rumors true ; do you love Octave ? ”

“ Monsieur,” she replied, “ to any other man I should answer that question only by a look ; but to you, and because you are indeed almost the father of Mon-

sieur de Camps, I reply by asking what you would think of a woman if to such a question she answered *yes*? To avow our love to him we love, when he loves us — ah! that may be; but even when we are certain of being loved forever, believe me, monsieur, it is an effort for us, and a reward to him. To say to another! — ”

She did not end her sentence, but rose, bowed to the old man, and withdrew into her private apartments, the doors of which, opening and closing behind her, had a language of their own to his sagacious ears.

“ Ah! the mischief!” thought he; “ what a woman! she is either a sly one or an angel; ” and he got into his hired coach, the horses of which were stamping on the pavement of the silent courtyard, while the coachman was asleep on his box after cursing for the hundredth time his tardy customer.

The next morning about eight o'clock the old gentleman mounted the stairs of a house in the rue de l'Observance where Octave de Camps was living. If there was ever an astonished man it was the young professor when he beheld his uncle. The door was unlocked, his lamp still burning; he had been sitting up all night.

“ You rascal!” said Monsieur de Bourbonne, sitting down in the nearest chair; “ since when is it the fashion to laugh at uncles who have twenty-six thousand francs

"She did not end her sentence, but rose, bowed to the old man, and withdrew into her private apartments."



a year from solid acres to which we are the sole heir? Let me tell you that in the olden time we stood in awe of such uncles as that. Come, speak up, what fault have you to find with me? Have n't I played my part as uncle properly? Did I ever require you to respect me? Have I ever refused you money? When did I shut the door in your face on pretence that you had come to look after my health? Have n't you had the most accommodating and the least domineering uncle that there is in France, — I wont say Europe, because that might be too presumptuous. You write to me, or you don't write, — no matter, I live on pledged affection, and I am making you the prettiest estate in all Touraine, the envy of the department. To be sure, I don't intend to let you have it till the last possible moment, but that's an excusable little fancy, is n't it? And what does monsieur himself do? — sells his own property and lives like a lackey! — ”

“ Uncle — ”

“ I 'm not talking about uncles, I 'm talking nephew. I have a right to your confidence. Come, confess at once; it is much the easiest way; I know that by experience. Have you been gambling? have you lost money at the Bourse? Say, ‘ Uncle, I 'm a wretch,’ and I'll hug you. But if you tell me any lies greater than those I used to tell at your age I'll sell my property, buy an annuity, and go back to the evil ways of my youth — if I can.”

“Uncle — ”

“I saw your Madame Firmiani yesterday,” went on the old fellow, kissing the tips of his fingers, which he gathered into a bunch. “She is charming. You have the consent and approbation of your uncle, if that will do you any good. As to the sanction of the Church, I suppose that’s useless, and the sacraments cost so much in these days. Come, speak out, have you ruined yourself for her?”

“Yes, uncle.”

“Ha! the jade! I’d have wagered it. In my time the women of the court were cleverer at ruining a man than the courtesans of to-day; but this one — I recognized her! — is a bit of the last century.”

“Uncle,” said Octave, with a manner that was tender and grave, “you are totally mistaken. Madame Firmiani deserves your esteem, and all the adoration the world gives her.”

“Youth, youth! always the same!” cried Monsieur de Bourbonne. “Well, go on; tell me the same old story. But please remember that my experience in gallantry is not of yesterday.”

“My dear, kind uncle, here is a letter which will tell you nearly all,” said Octave, taking it from an elegant portfolio, *her* gift, no doubt. “When you have read it I will tell you the rest, and you will then know a Madame Firmiani who is unknown to the world.”

“ I have n’t my spectacles ; read it aloud.”

Octave began : —

“ ‘ MY BELOVED — ’ ”

“ Hey, then you are still intimate with her?” interrupted his uncle.

“ Why yes, of course.”

“ You have n’t parted from her?”

“ Parted ! ” repeated Octave, “ we are married.”

“ Heavens ! ” cried Monsieur de Bourbonne, “ then why do you live in a garret?”

“ Let me go on.”

“ True — I’m listening.”

Octave resumed the letter, but there were passages which he could not read without deep emotion.

“ ‘ MY BELOVED HUSBAND, — You ask me the reason of my sadness. Has it, then, passed from my soul to my face ; or have you only guessed it? — but how could you fail to do so, one in heart as we are? I cannot deceive you ; this may be a misfortune, for it is one of the conditions of happy love that a wife shall be gay and caressing. Perhaps I ought to deceive you, but I would not do it even if the happiness with which you have blessed and overpowered me depended on it.

“ ‘ Ah ! dearest, how much gratitude there is in my love. I long to love you forever, without limit ; yes, I desire to be forever proud of you. A woman’s glory

is in the man she loves. Esteem, consideration, honor, must they not be his who receives our all? Well, my angel has fallen. Yes, dear, the tale you told me has tarnished my past joys. Since then I have felt myself humiliated in you, — you whom I thought the most honorable of men, as you are the most loving, the most tender. I must indeed have deep confidence in your heart, so young and pure, to make you this avowal which costs me much. Ah! my dear love, how is it that you, knowing your father had unjustly deprived others of their property, that *you* can keep it?

“‘And you told me of this criminal act in a room filled with the mute witnesses of our love; and you are a gentleman, and you think yourself noble, and I am yours! I try to find excuses for you; I do find them in your youth and thoughtlessness. I know there is still something of the child about you. Perhaps you have never thought seriously of what fortune and integrity are. Oh! how your laugh wounded me. Reflect on that ruined family, always in distress; poor young girls who have reason to curse you daily; an old father saying to himself each night: “We might not now be starving if that man’s father had been an honest man — ” ’”

“Good heavens!” cried Monsieur de Bourbonne, interrupting his nephew, “surely you have not been

such a fool as to tell that woman about your father's affair with the Bourgneufs? Women know more about wasting a fortune than making one."

"They know about integrity. But let me read on, uncle."

" 'Octave, no power on earth has authority to change the principles of honor. Look into your conscience and ask it by what name you are to call the action by which you hold your property.' "

The nephew looked at the uncle, who lowered his head.

" 'I will not tell you all the thoughts that assail me; they can be reduced to one, — this is it: I cannot respect the man who, knowingly, is smirched for a sum of money, whatever the amount may be; five francs stolen at play or five times a hundred thousand gained by a legal trick are equally dishonoring. I will tell you all. I feel myself degraded by the very love which has hitherto been all my joy. There rises in my soul a voice which my tenderness cannot stifle. Ah! I have wept to feel that I have more conscience than love. Were you to commit a crime I would hide you in my bosom from human justice, but my devotion could go no farther. Love, to a woman,

means boundless confidence, united to a need of reverencing, of esteeming, the being to whom she belongs. I have never conceived of love otherwise than as a fire in which all noble feelings are purified still more, — a fire which develops them.

“I have but one thing else to say: come to me poor, and my love shall be redoubled. If not, renounce it. Should I see you no more, I shall know what it means.

“But I do not wish, understand me, that you should make restitution because I urge it. Consult your own conscience. An act of justice such as that ought not to be a sacrifice made to love. I am your wife and not your mistress, and it is less a question of pleasing me than of inspiring in my soul a true respect.

“If I am mistaken, if you have ill-explained your father’s action, if, in short, you still think your right to the property equitable (oh! how I long to persuade myself that you are blameless), consider and decide by listening to the voice of your conscience; act wholly and solely from yourself. A man who loves a woman sincerely, as you love me, respects the sanctity of her trust in him too deeply to dishonor himself.

“I blame myself now for what I have written; a word might have sufficed, and I have preached to you! Scold me; I wish to be scolded, — but not much, only a

little. Dear, between us two the power is yours — you alone should perceive your own faults.’ ”

“ Well, uncle ? ” said Octave, whose eyes were full of tears.

“ There ’s more in the letter ; finish it.”

“ Oh, the rest is only to be read by a lover,” answered Octave, smiling.

“ Yes, right, my boy,” said the old man, gently. “ I have had many affairs in my day, but I beg you to believe that I too have loved, *et ego in Arcadiâ*. But I don’t understand yet why you give lessons in mathematics.”

“ My dear unclè, I am your nephew ; is n’t that as good as saying that I had dipped into the capital left me by my father ? After I had read this letter a sort of revolution took place within me. I paid my whole arrearage of remorse in one day. I cannot describe to you the state I was in. As I drove in the Bois a voice called to me, ‘ That horse is not yours ; ’ when I ate my dinner it was saying, ‘ You have stolen this food.’ I was ashamed. The fresher my honesty, the more intense it was. I rushed to Madame Firmiani. Uncle ! that day I had pleasures of the heart, enjoyments of the soul, that were far beyond millions. Together we made out the account of what was due to the Bourgneufs, and I condemned myself, against Madame

Firmiani's advice, to pay three per cent interest. But all I had did not suffice to cover the full amount. We were lovers enough for her to offer, and me to accept, her savings —"

"What! besides her other virtues does that adorable woman lay by money?" cried his uncle.

"Don't laugh at her, uncle; her position has obliged her to be very careful. Her husband went to Greece in 1820, and died there three years later. It has been impossible, up to the present time, to get legal proofs of his death, or obtain the will which he made leaving his whole property to his wife. These papers were either lost or stolen, or have gone astray during the troubles in Greece, — a country where registers are not kept as they are in France, and where we have no consul. Uncertain whether she might not be forced to give up her fortune, she has lived with the utmost prudence. As for me, I wish to acquire property which shall be *mine*, so as to provide for my wife in case she is forced to lose hers."

"But why didn't you tell me all this? My dear nephew, you might have known that I love you enough to pay all your good debts, the debts of a gentleman. I'll play the traditional uncle now, and revenge myself!"

"Ah! uncle, I know your vengeance! but let me get rich by my own industry. If you want to do me a

real service, make me an allowance of two or three thousand francs a year, till I see my way to an enterprise for which I shall want capital. At this moment I am so happy that all I desire is just the means of living. I give lessons so that I may not live at the cost of *any one*. If you only knew the happiness I had in making that restitution! I found the Bourgneufs, after a good deal of trouble, living miserably and in need of everything. The old father was a lottery agent; the two daughters kept his books and took care of the house; the mother was always ill. The daughters are charming girls, but they have been cruelly taught that the world thinks little of beauty without money. What a scene it was! I entered their house the accomplice in a crime; I left it an honest man, who had purged his father's memory. Uncle, I don't judge him; there is such excitement, such passion in a lawsuit that even an honorable man may be led astray by them. Lawyers can make the most unjust claims legal; laws have convenient syllogisms to quiet consciences. My visit was a drama. To *be* Providence itself; actually to fulfil that futile wish, "If heaven were to send us twenty thousand francs a year," — that silly wish we all make, laughing; to bring opulence to a family sitting by the light of one miserable lamp over a poor turf fire! — no, words cannot describe it. My extreme justice seemed to them unjust. Well! if there is a

Paradise my father is happy in it now. As for me, I am loved as no man was ever loved yet. Madame Firmiani gives me more than happiness; she has inspired me with a delicacy of feeling I think I lacked. So I call her *my dear conscience*, — a love-word which expresses certain secret harmonies within our hearts. I find honesty profitable; I shall get rich in time by myself. I've an industrial scheme in my head, and if it succeeds I shall earn millions."

"Ah! my boy, you have your mother's soul," said the old man, his eyes filling at the thought of his sister.

Just then, in spite of the distance between Octave's garret and the street, the young man heard the sound of a carriage.

"There she is!" he cried; "I know her horses by the way they are pulled up."

A few moments more, and Madame Firmiani entered the room.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, with a gesture of annoyance on seeing Monsieur de Bourbonne. "But our uncle is not in the way," she added quickly, smiling; "I came to humbly entreat my husband to accept my fortune. The Austrian Embassy has just sent me a document which proves the death of Monsieur Firmiani, also the will, which his valet was keeping safely to put into my own hands. Octave, you can accept it all; you are richer

than I, for you have treasures here" (laying her hand upon his heart) "to which none but God can add." Then, unable to support her happiness, she laid her head upon her husband's breast.

"My dear niece," said the old man, "in my day, we made love; in yours, you love. You women are all that is best in humanity; you are not even guilty of your faults, for they come through us."

THE END.

THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

By H. DE BALZAC

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE

THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT

A DOUBLE LIFE

THE PEACE OF A HOME

.



Mademoiselle Natalia Évangélista.

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THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT.

TO ROSSINI.

I.

PRO AND CON.

MONSIEUR DE MANERVILLE, the father, was a worthy Norman gentleman, well known to the Maréchal de Richelieu, who married him to one of the richest beir-esses of Bordeaux in the days when the old duke reigned in Guienne as governor. The Norman then sold the estate he owned in Bessin, and became a Gascon, allured by the beauty of the château de Lans-trac, a delightful residence owned by his wife. Dur-ing the last days of the reign of Louis XV., he bought the post of major of the Gate Guards, and lived till 1813, having by great good luck escaped the dangers of the Revolution in the following manner.

Toward the close of the year, 1790, he went to Mar-tinique, where his wife had interests, leaving the man-agement of his property in Gascogne to an honest man, a notary's clerk, named Mathias, who was inclined to — or at any rate did — give into the new ideas. On his return the Comte de Manerville found his possessions

intact and well-managed. This sound result was the fruit produced by grafting the Gascon on the Norman.

Madame de Manerville died in 1810. Having learned the importance of worldly goods through the dissipations of his youth, and, giving them, like many another old man, a higher place than they really hold in life, Monsieur de Manerville became increasingly economical, miserly, and sordid. Without reflecting that the avarice of parents prepares the way for the prodigalities of children, he allowed almost nothing to his son, although that son was an only child.

Paul de Manerville, coming home from the college of Vendôme in 1810, lived under close paternal discipline for three years. The tyranny by which the old man of seventy oppressed his heir influenced, necessarily, a heart and a character which were not yet formed. Paul, the son, without lacking the physical courage which is vital in the air of Gascony, dared not struggle against his father, and consequently lost that faculty of resistance which begets moral courage. His thwarted feelings were driven to the depths of his heart, where they remained without expression; later, when he felt them to be out of harmony with the maxims of the world, he could only think rightly and act mistakenly. He was capable of fighting for a mere word or look, yet he trembled at the thought of dismissing a servant, — his timidity showing itself in those contests only which required a persistent will. Capable of doing great things to fly from persecution, he would never have prevented it by systematic opposition, nor have faced it with the steady employment of force of will. Timid in thought, bold in actions, he

long preserved that inward simplicity which makes a man the dupe and the voluntary victim of things against which certain souls hesitate to revolt, preferring to endure them rather than complain. He was, in point of fact, imprisoned in his father's old mansion, for he had not enough money to consort with young men; he envied their pleasures while unable to share them.

The old gentleman took him every evening, in an old carriage drawn by ill-harnessed old horses, attended by ill-dressed old servants, to royalist houses, where he met a society composed of the relics of the parliamentary nobility and the martial nobility. These two nobilities coalescing after the Revolution for the purpose of resisting imperial influence, had now transformed themselves into a landed aristocracy. Crushed by the vast and swelling fortunes of the maritime cities, this Faubourg Saint-Germain of Bordeaux responded by lofty disdain to the sumptuous displays of commerce, government administrations, and the military. Too young to understand social distinctions and the necessities underlying the apparent assumption which they create, Paul was bored to death among these ancients, unaware that the connections of his youth would eventually secure to him that aristocratic pre-eminence which Frenchmen will forever desire.

He found some slight compensations for the dullness of these evenings in certain manual exercises which always delight young men, and which his father enjoined upon him. The old gentleman considered that to know the art of fencing and the use of arms, to ride well on horseback, to play tennis, to acquire good

manners, — in short, to possess all the frivolous accomplishments of the old nobility, — made a young man of the present day a finished gentleman. Accordingly, Paul took a fencing-lesson every morning, went to the riding-school, and practised in a pistol-gallery. The rest of his time he spent in reading novels, for his father would never have allowed the more abstruse studies now considered necessary to finish an education.

So monotonous a life would soon have killed the poor youth if the death of the old man had not delivered him from this tyranny at the moment when it was becoming intolerable. Paul found himself in possession of considerable capital, accumulated by his father's avarice, together with landed estates in the best possible condition. But he now held Bordeaux in horror; neither did he like Lanstrac, where his father had taken him to spend the summers, employing his whole time from morning till night in hunting.

As soon as the estate was fairly settled, the young heir, eager for enjoyment, bought consols with his capital, left the management of the landed property to old Mathias, his father's notary, and spent the next six years away from Bordeaux. At first he was attached to the French embassy at Naples; after that he was secretary of legation at Madrid, and then in London, — making in this way the tour of Europe.

After seeing the world and life, after losing several illusions, after dissipating all the loose capital which his father had amassed, there came a time when, in order to continue his way of life, Paul was forced to draw upon the territorial revenues which his notary was laying by. At this critical moment, seized by one of

the so-called virtuous impulses, he determined to leave Paris, return to Bordeaux, regulate his affairs, lead the life of a country gentleman at Lanstrac, improve his property, marry, and become, in the end, a deputy.

Paul was a count; nobility was once more of matrimonial value; he could, and he ought to make a good marriage. While many women desire a title, many others like to marry a man to whom a knowledge of life is familiar. Now Paul had acquired, in exchange for the sum of seven hundred thousand francs squandered in six years, that possession, which cannot be bought and is practically of more value than gold and silver; a knowledge which exacts long study, probation, examinations, friends, enemies, acquaintances, certain manners, elegance of form and demeanor, a graceful and euphonious name, — a knowledge, moreover, which means many love-affairs, duels, bets lost on a race-course, disillusion, deceptions, annoyances, toils, and a vast variety of undigested pleasures. In short, he had become what is called elegant. But in spite of his mad extravagance he had never made himself a mere fashionable man. In the burlesque army of men of the world, the man of fashion holds the place of a marshal of France, the man of elegance is the equivalent of a lieutenant-general. Paul enjoyed his lesser reputation, of elegance, and knew well how to sustain it. His servants were well-dressed, his equipages were cited, his suppers had a certain vogue; in short, his bachelor establishment was counted among the seven or eight whose splendor equalled that of the finest houses in Paris.

But — he had not caused the wretchedness of any

woman; he gambled without losing; his luck was not notorious; he was far too upright to deceive or mislead any one, no matter who, even a wanton; never did he leave his billets-doux lying about, and he possessed no coffer or desk for love-letters which his friends were at liberty to read while he tied his cravat or trimmed his beard. Moreover, not willing to dip into his Guienne property, he had not that bold extravagance which leads to great strokes and calls attention at any cost to the proceedings of a young man. Neither did he borrow money, but he had the folly to lend to friends, who then deserted him and spoke of him no more either for good or evil. He seemed to have regulated his dissipations methodically. The secret of his character lay in his father's tyranny, which had made him, as it were, a social mongrel.

So, one morning, he said to a friend named de Marsay, who afterwards became celebrated: —

“ My dear fellow, life has a meaning.”

“ You must be twenty-seven years of age before you can find it out,” replied de Marsay, laughing.

“ Well, I am twenty-seven; and precisely because I am twenty-seven I mean to live the life of a country gentleman at Lanstrac. I'll transport my belongings to Bordeaux into my father's old mansion, and I'll spend three months of the year in Paris in this house, which I shall keep.”

“ Will you marry?”

“ I shall marry.”

“ I'm your friend, as you know, my old Paul,” said de Marsay, after a moment's silence, “ and I say to you: settle down into a worthy father and husband

and you'll be ridiculous for the rest of your days. If you could be happy and ridiculous, the thing might be thought of ; but you will not be happy. You have n't a strong enough wrist to drive a household. I'll do you justice and say you are a perfect horseman ; no one knows as well as you how to pick up or throw down the reins, and make a horse prance, and sit firm to the saddle. But, my dear fellow, marriage is another thing. I see you now, led along at a slapping pace by Madame la Comtesse de Manerville, going whither you would not, oftener at a gallop than a trot, and presently unhorsed ! — yes, unhorsed into a ditch and your legs broken. Listen to me. You still have some forty-odd thousand francs a year from your property in the Gironde. Good. Take your horses and servants and furnish your house in Bordeaux ; you can be king of Bordeaux, you can promulgate there the edicts that we put forth in Paris ; you can be the correspondent of our stupidities. Very good. Play the rake in the provinces ; better still, commit follies ; follies may win you celebrity. But — don't marry. Who marries now-a-days ? Only merchants, for the sake of their capital, or to be two to drag the cart ; only peasants who want to produce children to work for them ; only brokers and notaries who want a wife's *dot* to pay for their practice ; only miserable kings who are forced to continue their miserable dynasties. But we are exempt from the pack, and you want to shoulder it ! And why *do* you want to marry ? You ought to give your best friend your reasons. In the first place, if you marry an heiress as rich as yourself, eighty thousand francs a year for two is not the same thing as forty thousand

francs a year for one, because the two are soon three or four when the children come. You have n't surely any love for that silly race of Manerville which would only hamper you? Are you ignorant of what a father and mother have to be? Marriage, my old Paul, is the silliest of all the social immolations; our children alone profit by it, and don't know its price till their horses are nibbling the flowers on our grave. Do you regret your father, that old tyrant who made your first years wretched? How can you be sure that your children will love you? The very care you take of their education, your precautions for their happiness, your necessary sternness will lessen their affection. Children love a weak or a prodigal father, whom they will despise in after years. You'll live betwixt fear and contempt. No man is a good head of a family merely because he wants to be. Look round on all our friends and name to me one whom you would like to have for a son. We have known a good many who dishonor their names. Children, my dear Paul, are the most difficult kind of merchandise to take care of. Yours, you think, will be angels; well, so be it! Have you ever sounded the gulf which lies between the lives of a bachelor and a married man? Listen. As a bachelor you can say to yourself: 'I shall never exhibit more than a certain amount of the ridiculous; the public will think of me what I choose it to think.' Married, you'll drop into the infinitude of the ridiculous! Bachelor, you can make your own happiness; you enjoy some to-day, you do without it to-morrow; married, you must take it as it comes; and the day you want it you will have to go without it. Marry, and you'll grow a blockhead;

you'll calculate dowries; you'll talk morality, public and religious; you'll think young men immoral and dangerous; in short, you'll become a social academician. It's pitiable! The old bachelor whose property the heirs are waiting for, who fights to his last breath with his nurse for a spoonful of drink, is blest in comparison with a married man. I'm not speaking of all that will happen to annoy, bore, irritate, coerce, oppose, tyrannize, narcotize, paralyze, and idiotize a man in marriage, in that struggle of two beings always in one another's presence, bound forever, who have coupled each other under the strange impression that they were suited. No, to tell you those things would be merely a repetition of Boileau, and we know him by heart. Still, I'll forgive your absurd idea if you will promise me to marry *en grand seigneur*; to entail your property; to have two legitimate children, to give your wife a house and household absolutely distinct from yours; to meet her only in society, and never to return from a journey without sending her a courier to announce it. Two hundred thousand francs a year will suffice for such a life and your antecedents will enable you to marry some rich English woman hungry for a title. That's an aristocratic life which seems to me thoroughly French; the only life in which we can retain the respect and friendship of a woman; the only life which distinguishes a man from the present crowd, — in short, the only life for which a young man should even think of resigning his bachelor blessings. Thus established, the Comte de Manerville may advise his epoch, place himself above the world, and be nothing less than a minister or an ambassador. Ridicule can never touch

him; he has gained the social advantages of marriage while keeping all the privileges of a bachelor."

"But, my good friend, I am not de Marsay; I am plainly, as you yourself do me the honor to say, Paul de Manerville, worthy father and husband, deputy of the Centre, possibly peer of France, — a destiny extremely commonplace; but I am modest and I resign myself."

"Yes, but your wife," said the pitiless de Marsay, "will she resign herself?"

"My wife, my dear fellow, will do as I wish."

"Ah! my poor friend, is that where you are? Adieu, Paul. Henceforth, I refuse to respect you. One word more, however, for I cannot agree coldly to your abdication. Look and see in what the strength of our position lies. A bachelor with only six thousand francs a year remaining to him has at least his reputation for elegance and the memory of success. Well, even that fantastic shadow has enormous value in it. Life still offers many chances to the unmarried man. Yes, he can aim at anything. But marriage, Paul, is the social 'Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.' Once married you can never be anything but what you then are — unless your wife should deign to care for you."

"But," said Paul, "you are crushing me down with exceptional theories. I am tired of living for others; of having horses merely to exhibit them; of doing all things for the sake of what may be said of them; of wasting my substance to keep fools from crying out: 'Dear, dear! Paul is still driving the same carriage. What has he done with his fortune? Does he squander it? Does he gamble at the Bourse? No, he's a

millionnaire. Madame such a one is mad about him. He sent to England for a harness which is certainly the handsomest in all Paris. The four-horse equipages of Messieurs de Marsay and de Manerville were much noticed at Longchamps; the harness was perfect'—in short, the thousand silly things with which a crowd of idiots lead us by the nose. Believe me, my dear Henri, I admire your power, but I don't envy it. You know how to judge of life; you think and act as a statesman; you are able to place yourself above all ordinary laws, received ideas, adopted conventions, and acknowledged prejudices; in short, you can grasp the profits of a situation in which I should find nothing but ill-luck. Your cool, systematic, possibly true deductions are, to the eyes of the masses, shockingly immoral. I belong to the masses. I must play my game of life according to the rules of the society in which I am forced to live. While putting yourself above all human things on peaks of ice, you still have feelings; but as for me, I should freeze to death. The life of that great majority, to which I belong in my commonplace way, is made up of emotions of which I now have need. Often a man coquets with a dozen women and obtains none. Then, whatever be his strength, his cleverness, his knowledge of the world, he undergoes convulsions, in which he is crushed as between two gates. For my part, I like the peaceful chances and changes of life; I want that wholesome existence in which we find a woman always at our side."

"A trifle indecorous, your marriage!" exclaimed de Marsay.

Paul was not to be put out of countenance, and continued: "Laugh if you like; I shall feel myself a happy man when my valet enters my room in the morning and says: 'Madame is awaiting monsieur for breakfast;' happier still at night, when I return to find a heart —"

"Altogether indecorous, my dear Paul. You are not yet moral enough to marry."

"— a heart in which to confide my interests and my secrets. I wish to live in such close union with a woman that our affection shall not depend upon a yes or a no, or be open to the disillusionings of love. In short, I have the necessary courage to become, as you say, a worthy husband and father. I feel myself fitted for family joys; I wish to put myself under the conditions prescribed by society; I desire to have a wife and children."

"You remind me of a hive of honey-bees! But go your way, you'll be a dupe all your life. Ha, ha! you wish to marry to have a wife! In other words, you wish to solve satisfactorily to your own profit the most difficult problem presented by those bourgeois morals which were created by the French Revolution; and, what is more, you mean to begin your attempt by a life of retirement. Do you think your wife won't crave the life you say you despise? Will *she* be disgusted with it, as you are? If you won't accept the noble conjugality just formulated for your benefit by your friend de Marsay, listen, at any rate, to his final advice. Remain a bachelor for the next thirteen years; amuse yourself like a lost soul; then, at forty, on your first attack of gout, marry a widow of thirty-six.

Then you may possibly be happy. If you now take a young girl to wife, you 'll die a madman."

"*Ah ça !* tell me why!" cried Paul, somewhat piqued.

"My dear fellow," replied de Marsay, "Boileau's satire against women is a tissue of poetical common-places. Why should n't women have defects? Why condemn them for having the most obvious thing in human nature? To my mind, the problem of marriage is not at all at the point where Boileau puts it. Do you suppose that marriage is the same thing as love, and that being a man suffices to make a wife love you? Have you gathered nothing in your boudoir experience but pleasant memories? I tell you that everything in our bachelor life leads to fatal errors in the married man unless he is a profound observer of the human heart. In the happy days of his youth a man, by the caprice of our customs, is always lucky; he triumphs over women who are all ready to be triumphed over and who obey their own desires. One thing after another — the obstacles created by the laws, the sentiments and natural defences of women — all engender a mutuality of sensations which deceives superficial persons as to their future relations in marriage, where obstacles no longer exist, where the wife submits to love instead of permitting it, and frequently repulses pleasure instead of desiring it. Then, the whole aspect of a man's life changes. The bachelor, who is free and without a care, need never fear repulsion; in marriage, repulsion is almost certain and irreparable. It may be possible for a lover to make a woman reverse an unfavorable decision, but such a change, my dear

Paul, is the Waterloo of husbands. Like Napoleon, the husband is thenceforth condemned to victories which, in spite of their number, do not prevent the first defeat from crushing him. The woman, so flattered by the perseverance, so delighted with the ardor of a lover, calls the same things brutality in a husband. You, who talk of marrying, and who will marry, have you ever meditated on the Civil Code? I myself have never muddled my feet in that hovel of commentators, that garret of gossip, called the Law-school. I have never so much as opened the Code; but I see its application on the vitals of society. The Code, my dear Paul, makes woman a ward; it considers her a child, a minor. Now how must we govern children? By fear. In that one word, Paul, is the curb of the beast. Now, feel your own pulse! Have you the strength to play the tyrant, — you, so gentle, so kind a friend, so confiding; you, at whom I have laughed, but whom I love, and love enough to reveal to you my science? For this is science. Yes, it proceeds from a science which the Germans are already calling Anthropology. Ah! if I had not already solved the mystery of life by pleasure, if I had not a profound antipathy for those who think instead of act, if I did not despise the ninies who are silly enough to believe in the truth of a book, when the sands of the African deserts are made of the ashes of I know not how many unknown and pulverized Londons, Romes, Venices, and Parises, I would write a book on modern marriages made under the influence of the Christian system, and I'd stick a lantern on that heap of sharp stones among which lie the votaries of the social *multiplicamini*. But the

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question is, Does humanity require even an hour of my time? And besides, is n't the more reasonable use of ink that of snaring hearts by writing love-letters? — Well, shall you bring the Comtesse de Manerville here, and let us see her? ”

“ Perhaps,” said Paul.

“ We shall still be friends,” said de Marsay.

“ If — ” replied Paul.

“ Don't be uneasy; we will treat you politely, as Maison-Rouge treated the English at Fontenoy.”

II.

THE PINK OF FASHION.

THOUGH the foregoing conversation affected the Comte de Manerville somewhat, he made it a point of duty to carry out his intentions, and he returned to Bordeaux during the winter of the year 1821.

The expenses he incurred in restoring and furnishing his family mansion sustained the reputation for elegance which had preceded him. Introduced through his former connections to the royalist society of Bordeaux, to which he belonged as much by his personal opinions as by his name and fortune, he soon obtained a fashionable pre-eminence. His knowledge of life, his manners, his Parisian acquirements enchanted the faubourg Saint-Germain of Bordeaux. An old marquise made use of a term formerly in vogue at court to express the flowery beauty of the fops and beaux of the olden time, whose language and demeanor were social laws: she called him "the pink of fashion." The liberal clique caught up the word and used it satirically as a nickname, while the royalist party continued to employ it in good faith.

Paul de Manerville acquitted himself gloriously of the obligations imposed by his flowery title. It happened to him, as to many a mediocre actor, that the day when the public granted him their full attention

he became, one may almost say, superior. Feeling at his ease, he displayed the fine qualities which accompanied his defects. His wit had nothing sharp or bitter in it; his manners were not supercilious; his intercourse with women expressed the respect they like, — it was neither too deferential, nor too familiar; his foppery went no farther than a care for his personal appearance which made him agreeable; he showed consideration for rank; he allowed young men a certain freedom, to which his Parisian experience assigned due limits; though skilful with sword and pistol, he was noted for a feminine gentleness for which others were grateful. His medium height and plumpness (which had not yet increased into obesity, an obstacle to personal elegance) did not prevent his outer man from playing the part of a Bordelais Brummell. A white skin tinged with the hues of health, handsome hands and feet, blue eyes with long lashes, black hair, graceful motions, a chest voice which kept to its middle tones and vibrated in the listener's heart, harmonized well with his sobriquet. Paul was indeed that delicate flower which needs such careful culture, the qualities of which display themselves only in a moist and suitable soil, — a flower which rough treatment dwarfs, which the hot sun burns, and a frost lays low. He was one of those men made to receive happiness, rather than to give it; who have something of the woman in their nature, wishing to be divined, understood, encouraged; in short, a man to whom conjugal love ought to come as a providence.

If such a character creates difficulties in private life, it is gracious and full of attraction for the world.

Consequently, Paul had great success in the narrow social circle of the provinces, where his mind, always, so to speak, in half-tints, was better appreciated than in Paris.

The arrangement of his house and the restoration of the château de Lanstrac, where he introduced the comfort and luxury of an English country-house, absorbed the capital saved by his notary during the preceding six years. Reduced now to his strict income of forty-odd thousand a year, he thought himself wise and prudent in so regulating his household as not to exceed it.

After publicly exhibiting his equipages, entertaining the most distinguished young men of the place, and giving various hunting parties on the estate at Lanstrac, Paul saw very plainly that provincial life would never do without marriage. Too young to employ his time in miserly occupations, or in trying to interest himself in the speculative improvements in which provincials sooner or later engage (compelled thereto by the necessity of establishing their children), he soon felt the need of that variety of distractions a habit of which becomes at last the very life of a Parisian. A name to preserve, property to transmit to heirs, social relations to be created by a household where the principal families of the neighborhood could assemble, and a weariness of all irregular connections, were not, however, the determining reasons of his matrimonial desires. From the time he first returned to the provinces he had been secretly in love with the queen of Bordeaux, the great beauty, Mademoiselle Évangélista.

About the beginning of the century, a rich Spaniard,

named Évangélista, established himself in Bordeaux, where his letters of recommendation, as well as his large fortune, gave him an entrance to the salons of the nobility. His wife contributed greatly to maintain him in the good graces of an aristocracy which may perhaps have adopted him in the first instance merely to pique the society of the class below them. Madame Évangélista, who belonged to the Casa-Reale, an illustrious family of Spain, was a creole, and, like all women served by slaves, she lived as a great lady, knew nothing of the value of money, repressed no whims, even the most expensive, finding them ever satisfied by an adoring husband who generously concealed from her knowledge the running-gear of the financial machine. Happy in finding her pleased with Bordeaux, where his interests obliged him to live, the Spaniard bought a house, set up a household, received in much style, and gave many proofs of possessing a fine taste in all things. Thus, from 1800 to 1812, Monsieur and Madame Évangélista were objects of great interest to the community of Bordeaux.

The Spaniard died in 1813, leaving his wife a widow at thirty-two years of age, with an immense fortune and the prettiest little girl in the world, a child of eleven, who promised to be, and did actually become, a most accomplished young woman. Clever as Madame Évangélista was, the Restoration altered her position; the royalist party cleared its ranks and several of the old families left Bordeaux. Though the head and hand of her husband were lacking in the direction of her affairs, for which she had hitherto shown the indifference of a creole and the inaptitude of

a lackadaisical woman, she was determined to make no change in her manner of living. At the period when Paul resolved to return to his native town, Mademoiselle Natalie Évangélista was a remarkably beautiful young girl, and, apparently, the richest match in Bordeaux, where the steady diminution of her mother's capital was unknown. In order to prolong her reign, Madame Évangélista had squandered enormous sums. Brilliant fêtes and the continuation of an almost regal style of living kept the public in its past belief as to the wealth of the Spanish family.

Natalie was now in her nineteenth year, but no proposal of marriage had as yet reached her mother's ear. Accustomed to gratify her fancies, Mademoiselle Évangélista wore cashmeres and jewels, and lived in a style of luxury which alarmed all speculative suitors in a region and at a period when sons were as calculating as their parents. The fatal remark, "None but a prince can afford to marry Mademoiselle Évangélista," circulated among the salons and the cliques. Mothers of families, dowagers who had granddaughters to establish, young girls jealous of Natalie, whose elegance and tyrannical beauty annoyed them, took pains to envenom this opinion with treacherous remarks. When they heard a possible suitor say with ecstatic admiration, as Natalie entered a ball-room, "Heavens, how beautiful she is!" "Yes," the mammas would answer, "but expensive." If some new-comer thought Mademoiselle Évangélista bewitching and said to a marriageable man that he couldn't do better, "Who would be bold enough," some woman would reply, "to marry a girl whose mother gives her a thou-

sand francs a month for her toilet, — a girl who has horses and a maid of her own, and wears laces? Yes, her *peignoirs* are trimmed with meehlin. The price of her washing would support the household of a clerk. She wears pelerines in the morning which actually cost six francs to get up.”

These, and other speeches said occasionally in the form of praise extinguished the desires that some men might have had to marry the beautiful Spanish girl. Queen of every ball, accustomed to flattery, *blasée* with the smiles and the admiration which followed her every step, Natalie, nevertheless, knew nothing of life. She lived as the bird which flies, as the flower that blooms, finding every one about her eager to do her will. She was ignorant of the price of things; she knew neither the value of money, nor whence it came, how it should be managed, and how spent. Possibly she thought that every household had cooks and coachmen, lady's-maids and footmen, as the fields have hay and the trees their fruits. To her, beggars and paupers, fallen trees and waste lands seemed in the same category. Pampered and petted as her mother's hope, no fatigue was allowed to spoil her pleasure. Thus she bounded through life as a courser on his steppe, unbridled and unshod.

Six months after Paul's arrival the Pink of Fashion and the Queen of Balls met in presence of the highest society of the town of Bordeaux. The two flowers looked at each other with apparent coldness, and mutually thought each other charming. Interested in watching the effects of the meeting, Madame Évangélista divined in the expression of Paul's eyes the

feelings within him, and she muttered to herself, "He will be my son-in-law." Paul, on the other hand, said to himself, as he looked at Natalie, "She will be my wife."

The wealth of the *Évangélistas*, proverbial in Bordeaux, had remained in Paul's mind as a memory of his childhood. Thus the pecuniary conditions were known to him from the start, without necessitating those discussions and inquiries which are as repugnant to a timid mind as to a proud one. When some persons attempted to say to Paul a few flattering phrases as to Natalie's manner, language, and beauty, ending by remarks, cruelly calculated to deter him, on the lavish extravagance of the *Évangélistas*, the *Pink of Fashion* replied with a disdain that was well-deserved by such provincial pettiness. This method of receiving such speeches soon silenced them; for he now set the tone to the ideas and language as well as to the manners of those about him. He had imported from his travels a certain development of the Britannic personality with its icy barriers, also a tone of Byronian pessimism as to life, together with English plate, boot-polish, ponies, yellow gloves, cigars, and the habit of galloping.

It thus happened that Paul escaped the discouragements hitherto presented to marriageable men by dowagers and young girls. Madame *Évangélista* began by asking him to formal dinners on various occasions. The *Pink of Fashion* would not, of course, miss festivities to which none but the most distinguished young men of the town were bidden. In spite of the coldness that Paul assumed, which deceived neither

mother nor daughter, he was drawn, step by step, into the path of marriage. Sometimes as he passed in his tilbury, or rode by on his fine English horse, he heard the young men of his acquaintance say to one another: —

“There’s a lucky man. He is rich and handsome, and is to marry, so they say, Mademoiselle Évangélista. There are some men for whom the world seems made.”

When he met the Évangélistas he felt proud of the particular distinction which mother and daughter imparted to their bows. If Paul had not secretly, within his heart, fallen in love with Mademoiselle Natalie, society would certainly have married him to her in spite of himself. Society, which never causes good, is the accomplice of much evil; then when it beholds the evil it has hatched maternally, it rejects and revenges it. Society in Bordeaux, attributing a *dot* of a million to Mademoiselle Évangélista, bestowed it upon Paul without awaiting the consent of either party. Their fortunes, so it was said, agreed as well as their persons. Paul had the same habits of luxury and elegance in the midst of which Natalie had been brought up. He had just arranged for himself a house such as no other man in Bordeaux could have offered her. Accustomed to Parisian expenses and the caprices of Parisian women, he alone was fitted to meet the pecuniary difficulties which were likely to follow this marriage with a girl who was as much of a creole and a great lady as her mother. Where they themselves, remarked the marriageable men, would have been ruined, the Comte de Manerville, rich as he was, could evade disaster. In short, the marriage was made. Persons in the highest

royalist circles said a few engaging words to Paul which flattered his vanity:—

“Every one gives you *Mademoiselle Évangélista*. If you marry her you will do well. You could not find, even in Paris, a more delightful girl. She is beautiful, graceful, elegant, and takes after the *Casa-Reales* through her mother. You will make a charming couple; you have the same tastes, the same desires in life, and you will certainly have the most agreeable house in Bordeaux. Your wife need only bring her night-cap; all is ready for her. You are fortunate indeed in such a mother-in-law. A woman of intelligence, and very adroit, she will be a great help to you in public life, to which you ought to aspire. Besides, she has sacrificed everything to her daughter, whom she adores, and Natalie will, no doubt, prove a good wife, for she loves her mother. You must soon bring the matter to a conclusion.”

“That is all very well,” replied Paul, who, in spite of his love, was desirous of keeping his freedom of action, “but I must be sure that the conclusion shall be a happy one.”

He now went frequently to *Madame Évangélista*’s, partly to occupy his vacant hours, which were harder for him to employ than for most men. There alone he breathed the atmosphere of grandeur and luxury to which he was accustomed.

At forty years of age, *Madame Évangélista* was beautiful, with the beauty of those glorious summer sunsets which crown a cloudless day. Her spotless reputation had given an endless topic of conversation to the Bordeaux cliques; the curiosity of the women

was all the more lively because the widow gave signs of the temperament which makes a Spanish woman and a creole particularly noted. She had black eyes and hair, the feet and form of a Spanish woman, — that swaying form the movements of which have a name in Spain. Her face, still beautiful, was particularly seductive for its creole complexion, the vividness of which can be described only by comparing it to muslin overlying crimson, so equally is the whiteness suffused with color. Her figure, which was full and rounded, attracted the eye by a grace which united nonchalance with vivacity, strength with ease. She attracted and she imposed, she seduced, but promised nothing. She was tall, which gave her at times the air and carriage of a queen. Men were taken by her conversation like birds in a snare; for she had by nature that genius which necessity bestows on schemers; she advanced from concession to concession, strengthening herself with what she gained to ask for more, knowing well how to retreat with rapid steps when concessions were demanded in return. Though ignorant of facts, she had known the courts of Spain and Naples, the celebrated men of the two Americas, many illustrious families of England and the continent, all of which gave her so extensive an education superficially that it seemed immense. She received her society with the grace and dignity which are never learned, but which come to certain naturally fine spirits like a second nature; assimilating choice things wherever they are met. If her reputation for virtue was unexplained, it gave at any rate much authority to her actions, her conversation, and her character.

Mother and daughter had a true friendship for each other, beyond the filial and maternal sentiment. They suited one another, and their perpetual contact had never produced the slightest jar. Consequently many persons explained Madame Évangélista's actions by maternal love. But although Natalie consoled her mother's persistent widowhood, she may not have been the only motive for it. Madame Évangélista had been, it was said, in love with a man who recovered his titles and property under the Restoration. This man, desirous of marrying her in 1814 had discreetly severed the connection in 1816. Madame Évangélista, to all appearance the best-hearted woman in the world, had, in the depths of her nature, a fearful quality, explainable only by Catherine de Médici's device: *Odiute e aspettate* — "Hate and wait." Accustomed to rule, having always been obeyed, she was like other royalties, amiable, gentle, easy and pleasant in ordinary life, but terrible, implacable, if the pride of the woman, the Spaniard, and the Casa-Reale was touched. She never forgave. This woman believed in the power of her hatred; she made an evil fate of it and bade it hover above her enemy. This fatal power she employed against the man who had jilted her. Events which seemed to prove the influence of her *jettatura* — the casting of an evil eye — confirmed her superstitious faith in herself. Though a minister and peer of France, this man began to ruin himself, and soon came to total ruin. His property, his personal and public honor were doomed to perish. At this crisis Madame Évangélista in her brilliant equipage passed her faithless lover walking on foot in the Champs Élysées, and

crushed him with a look which flamed with triumph. This misadventure, which occupied her mind for two years, was the original cause of her not remarrying. Later, her pride had drawn comparisons between the suitors who presented themselves and the husband who had loved her so sincerely and so well.

She had thus reached, through mistaken calculations and disappointed hopes, that period of life when women have no other part to take in life than that of mother; a part which involves the sacrifice of themselves to their children, the placing of their interests outside of self upon another household, — the last refuge of human affections.

Madame Évangélista divined Paul's nature intuitively, and hid her own from his perception. Paul was the very man she desired for a son-in-law, for the responsible editor of her future power. He belonged, through his mother, to the family of Maulincour, and the old Baronne de Maulincour, the friend of the Vidame de Pamiers, was then living in the centre of the faubourg Saint-Germain. The grandson of the baroness, Auguste de Maulincour, held a fine position in the army. Paul would therefore be an excellent introducer for the Évangélistas into Parisian society. The widow had known something of the Paris of the Empire, she now desired to shine in the Paris of the Restoration. There alone were the elements of political fortune, the only business in which women of the world could decently co-operate. Madame Évangélista, compelled by her husband's affairs to reside in Bordeaux, disliked the place. She desired a wider field, as gamblers rush to higher stakes. For her own personal ends, therefore,

she looked to Paul as a means of destiny, she proposed to employ the resources of her own talent and knowledge of life to advance her son-in-law, in order to enjoy through him the delights of power. Many men are thus made the screens of secret feminine ambitions. Madame Évangélista had, however, more than one interest, as we shall see, in laying hold of her daughter's husband.

Paul was naturally captivated by this woman, who charmed him all the more because she seemed to seek no influence over him. In reality she was using her ascendancy to magnify herself, her daughter, and all her surroundings in his eyes, for the purpose of ruling from the start the man in whom she saw a means of gratifying her social longings. Paul, on the other hand, began to value himself more highly when he felt himself appreciated by the mother and daughter. He thought himself much cleverer than he really was when he found his reflections and sayings accepted and understood by Mademoiselle Natalie — who raised her head and smiled in response to them — and by the mother, whose flattery seemed always involuntary. The two women were so kind and friendly to him, he was so sure of pleasing them, they ruled him so delightfully by holding the thread of his self-love, that he soon passed all his time at the hôtel Évangélista.

A year after his return to Bordeaux, Comte Paul, without having declared himself, was so attentive to Natalie that the world considered him as courting her. Neither mother nor daughter appeared to be thinking of marriage. Mademoiselle Évangélista preserved towards Paul the reserve of a great lady who can make herself charming and converse agreeably without

permitting a single step into intimacy. This reserve, so little customary among provincials, pleased Paul immensely. Timid men are shy; sudden proposals alarm them. They retreat from happiness when it comes with a rush, and accept misfortune if it presents itself mildly with gentle shadows. Paul therefore committed himself in his own mind all the more because he saw no effort on Madame Évangélista's part to bind him. She fairly seduced him one evening by remarking that to superior women as well as men there came a period of life when ambition superseded all the earlier emotions of life.

"That woman is fitted," thought Paul, as he left her, "to advance me in diplomacy before I am even made a deputy."

If, in all the circumstances of life, a man does not turn over and over both things and ideas in order to examine them thoroughly under their different aspects before taking action, that man is weak and incomplete and in danger of fatal failure. At this moment Paul was an optimist; he saw everything to advantage, and did not tell himself that an ambitious mother-in-law might prove a tyrant. So, every evening as he left the house, he fancied himself a married man, allured his mind with its own thought, and slipped on the slippers of wedlock cheerfully. In the first place, he had enjoyed his freedom too long to regret the loss of it; he was tired of a bachelor's life, which offered him nothing new; he now saw only its annoyances; whereas if he thought at times of the difficulties of marriage, its pleasures, in which lay novelty, came far more prominently before his mind.

"Marriage," he said to himself, "is disagreeable for people without means, but half its troubles disappear before wealth."

Every day some favorable consideration swelled the advantages which he now saw in this particular alliance.

"No matter to what position I attain, Natalie will always be on the level of her part," thought he, "and that is no small merit in a woman. How many of the Empire men I've seen who suffered horribly through their wives! It is a great condition of happiness not to feel one's pride or one's vanity wounded by the companion we have chosen. A man can never be really unhappy with a well-bred wife; she will never make him ridiculous; such a woman is certain to be useful to him. Natalie will receive in her own house admirably."

So thinking, he taxed his memory as to the most distinguished women of the faubourg Saint-Germain, in order to convince himself that Natalie could, if not eclipse them, at any rate stand among them on a footing of perfect equality. All comparisons were to her advantage, for they rested on his own imagination, which followed his desires. Paris would have shown him daily other natures, young girls of other styles of beauty and charm, and the multiplicity of impressions would have balanced his mind; whereas in Bordeaux Natalie had no rivals, she was the solitary flower; moreover, she appeared to him at a moment when Paul was under the tyranny of an idea to which most men succumb at his age.

Thus these reasons of propinquity, joined to reasons

of self-love and a real passion which had no means of satisfaction except by marriage, led Paul on to an irrational love, which he had, however, the good sense to keep to himself. He even endeavored to study Mademoiselle Évangélista as a man should who desires not to compromise his future life; for the words of his friend de Marsay did sometimes rumble in his ears like a warning. But, in the first place, persons accustomed to luxury have a certain indifference to it which misleads them. They despise it, they use it; it is an instrument, and not the object of their existence. Paul never imagined, as he observed the habits of life of the two ladies, that they covered a gulf of ruin. Then, though there may exist some general rules to soften the asperities of marriage, there are none by which they can be accurately foreseen and evaded. When trouble arises between two persons who have undertaken to render life agreeable and easy to each other, it comes from the contact of continual intimacy, which, of course, does not exist between young people before they marry, and will never exist so long as our present social laws and customs prevail in France. All is more or less deception between the two young persons about to take each other for life, — an innocent and involuntary deception, it is true. Each endeavors to appear in a favorable light; both take a tone and attitude conveying a more favorable idea of their nature than they are able to maintain in after years. Real life, like the weather, is made up of gray and cloudy days alternating with those when the sun shines and the fields are gay. Young people, however, exhibit fine weather and no clouds. Later they attribute

to marriage the evils inherent in life itself; for there is in man a disposition to lay the blame of his own misery on the persons and things that surround him.

To discover in the demeanor, or the countenance, or the words, or the gestures of Mademoiselle Évangélista any indication that revealed the imperfections of her character, Paul must have possessed not only the knowledge of Lavater and Gall, but also a science in which there exists no formula of doctrine, — the individual and personal science of an observer, which, for its perfection, requires an almost universal knowledge. Natalie's face, like that of most young girls, was impenetrable. The deep, serene peace given by sculptors to the virgin faces of Justice and Innocence, divinities aloof from all earthly agitations, is the greatest charm of a young girl, the sign of her purity. Nothing, as yet, has stirred her; no shattered passion, no hope betrayed has clouded the placid expression of that pure face. Is that expression assumed? If so, there is no young girl behind it.

Natalie, closely held to the heart of her mother, had received, like other Spanish women, an education that was solely religious, together with a few instructions from her mother as to the part in life she was called upon to play. Consequently, the calm, untroubled expression of her face was natural. And yet it formed a casing in which the woman was wrapped as the moth in its cocoon. Nevertheless, any man clever at handling the scalpel of analysis might have detected in Natalie certain indications of the difficulties her character would present when brought into contact with conjugal or social life. Her beauty, which was really

marvellous, came from extreme regularity of feature harmonizing with the proportions of the head and the body. This species of perfection augurs ill for the mind; and there are few exceptions to the rule. All superior nature is found to have certain slight imperfections of form which become irresistible attractions, luminous points from which shine vivid sentiments, and on which the eye rests gladly. Perfect harmony expresses usually the coldness of a mixed organization.

Natalie's waist was round, — a sign of strength, but also the infallible indication of a will which becomes obstinacy in persons whose mind is neither keen nor broad. Her hands, like those of a Greek statue, confirmed the predictions of face and figure by revealing an inclination for illogical domination, of willing for will's sake only. Her eyebrows met, — a sign, according to some observers, which indicates jealousy. The jealousy of superior minds becomes emulation and leads to great things; that of small minds turns to hatred. The "hate and wait" of her mother was in her nature, without disguise. Her eyes were black apparently, though really brown with orange streaks, contrasting with her hair, of the ruddy tint so prized by the Romans, called auburn in England, a color which often appears in the offspring of persons of jet black hair, like that of Monsieur and Madame Évangélista. The whiteness and delicacy of Natalie's complexion gave to the contrast of color in her eyes and hair an inexpressible charm; and yet it was a charm that was purely external; for whenever the lines of a face are lacking in a certain soft roundness, whatever may be the finish and grace of the details, the

beauty therein expressed is not of the soul. These roses of deceptive youth will drop their leaves, and you will be surprised in a few years to see hardness and dryness where you once admired what seemed to be the beauty of noble qualities.

Though the outlines of Natalie's face had something august about them, her chin was slightly *empâté*, — a painter's expression which will serve to show the existence of sentiments the violence of which would only become manifest in after life. Her mouth, a trifle drawn in, expressed a haughty pride in keeping with her hand, her chin, her brows, and her beautiful figure. And — as a last diagnostic to guide the judgment of a connoisseur — Natalie's pure voice, a most seductive voice, had certain metallic tones. Softly as that brassy ring was managed, and in spite of the grace with which its sounds ran through the compass of the voice, that organ revealed the character of the Duke of Alba, from whom the Casa-Reales were collaterally descended. These indications were those of violent passions without tenderness, sudden devotions, irreconcilable dislikes, a mind without intelligence, and the desire to rule natural to persons who feel themselves inferior to their pretensions.

These defects, born of temperament and constitution, were buried in Natalie like ore in a mine, and would only appear under the shocks and harsh treatment to which all characters are subjected in this world. Meantime the grace and freshness of her youth, the distinction of her manners, her sacred ignorance, and the sweetness of a young girl, gave a delicate glamour to her features which could not fail to

mislead an unthinking or superficial mind. Her mother had early taught her the trick of agreeable talk which appears to imply superiority, replying to arguments by clever jests, and attracting by the graceful volubility beneath which a woman hides the subsoil of her mind, as Nature disguises her barren strata beneath a wealth of ephemeral vegetation. Natalie had the charm of children who have never known what it is to suffer. She charmed by her frankness, and had none of that solemn air which mothers impose on their daughters by laying down a programme of behavior and language until the time comes when they marry and are emancipated. She was gay and natural, like any young girl who knows nothing of marriage, expects only pleasure from it, replies to all objections with a jest, foresees no troubles, and thinks she is acquiring the right to have her own way.

How could Paul, who loved as men love when desire increases love, perceive in a girl of this nature whose beauty dazzled him, the woman, such as she would probably be at thirty, when observers themselves have been misled by these appearances? Besides, if happiness might prove difficult to find in a marriage with such a girl, it was not impossible. Through these embryo defects shone several fine qualities. There is no good quality which, if properly developed by the hand of an able master, will not stifle defects, especially in a young girl who loves him. But to render ductile so intractable a woman, the iron wrist, about which de Marsay had preached to Paul, was needful. The Parisian dandy was right. Fear, inspired by love is an infallible instrument by which to manage the

minds of women. Whoso loves, fears; whoso fears is nearer to affection than to hatred.

Had Paul the coolness, firmness, and judgment required for this struggle, which an able husband ought not to let the wife suspect? Did Natalie love Paul? Like most young girls, Natalie mistook for love the first emotions of instinct and the pleasure she felt in Paul's external appearance; but she knew nothing of the things of marriage nor the demands of a home. To her, the Comte de Manerville, a rising diplomatist, to whom the courts of Europe were known, and one of the most elegant young men in Paris, could not seem, what perhaps he was, an ordinary man, without moral force, timid, though brave in some ways, energetic perhaps in adversity, but helpless against the vexations and annoyances that hinder happiness. Would she, in after years, have sufficient tact and insight to distinguish Paul's noble qualities in the midst of his minor defects? Would she not magnify the latter and forget the former, after the manner of young wives who know nothing of life? There comes a time when wives will pardon defects in the husband who spares her annoyances, considering annoyances in the same category as misfortunes. What conciliating power, what wise experience would uphold and enlighten the home of this young pair? Paul and his wife would doubtless think they loved when they had really not advanced beyond the endearments and compliments of the honeymoon. Would Paul in that early period yield to the tyranny of his wife, instead of establishing his empire? Could Paul say, No? All was peril to a man so weak where even a strong man ran some risks.

The subject of this Study is not the transition of a bachelor into a married man, — a picture which, if broadly composed, would not lack the attraction which the inner struggles of our nature and feelings give to the commonest situations in life. The events and the ideas which led to the marriage of Paul with Natalie Évangélista are an introduction to our real subject, which is to sketch the great comedy that precedes, in France, all conjugal pairing. This Scene, until now singularly neglected by our dramatic authors although it offers novel resources to their wit, controlled Paul's future life and was now awaited by Madame Évangélista with feelings of terror. We mean the discussion which takes place on the subject of the marriage contract in all families, whether noble or bourgeois, for human passions are as keenly excited by small interests as by large ones. These comedies, played before a notary, all resemble, more or less, the one we shall now relate, the interest of which will be far less in the pages of this book than in the memories of married persons.

III.

THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT — FIRST DAY.

AT the beginning of the winter of 1822, Paul de Manerville made a formal request, through his great-aunt, the Baronne de Maulincour, for the hand of Mademoiselle Natalie Évangélista. Though the baroness never stayed more than two months in Médoc, she remained on this occasion till the last of October, in order to assist her nephew through the affair and play the part of a mother to him. After conveying the first suggestions to Madame Évangélista the experienced old woman returned to inform Paul of the results of the overture.

“My child,” she said, “the affair is won. . . In talking of property, I found that Madame Évangélista gives nothing of her own to her daughter. Mademoiselle Natalie’s dowry is her patrimony. Marry her, my dear boy. Men who have a name and an estate to transmit, a family to continue, must, sooner or later, end in marriage. I wish I could see my dear Auguste taking that course. You can now carry on the marriage without me; I have nothing to give you but my blessing, and women as old as I are out of place at a wedding. I leave for Paris to-morrow. When you present your wife in society I shall be able to see her and assist her far more to the purpose than now. If

you had had no house in Paris I would gladly have arranged the second floor of mine for you."

"Dear aunt," said Paul, "I thank you heartily. But what do you mean when you say that the mother gives nothing of her own, and that the daughter's dowry is her patrimony?"

"The mother, my dear boy, is a sly cat, who takes advantage of her daughter's beauty to impose conditions and allow you only that which she cannot prevent you from having; namely, the daughter's fortune from her father. We old people know the importance of inquiring closely, What has he? What has she? I advise you therefore to give particular instructions to your notary. The marriage contract, my dear child, is the most sacred of all duties. If your father and your mother had not made their bed properly you might now be sleeping without sheets. You will have children, they are the commonest results of marriage, and you must think of them. Consult Maître Mathias our old notary."

Madame de Maulincour departed, having plunged Paul into a state of extreme perplexity. His mother-in-law a sly cat! Must he struggle for his interests in the marriage contract? Was it necessary to defend them? Who was likely to attack them?

He followed the advice of his aunt and confided the drawing-up of the marriage contract to Maître Mathias. But these threatened discussions oppressed him, and he went to see Madame Évangélista and announce his intentions in a state of rather lively agitation. Like all timid men, he shrank from allowing the distrust his aunt had put into his mind to be seen; in fact, he con-

sidered it insulting. To avoid even a slight jar with a person so imposing to his mind as his future mother-in-law, he proceeded to state his intentions with the circumlocution natural to persons who dare not face a difficulty.

“Madame,” he said, choosing a moment when Natalie was absent from the room, “you know, of course, what a family notary is. Mine is a worthy old man, to whom it would be a sincere grief if he were not intrusted with the drawing of my marriage contract.”

“Why, of course!” said Madame Évangélista, interrupting him, “but are not marriage contracts always made by agreement of the notaries of both families?”

The time that Paul took to reply to this question was occupied by Madame Évangélista in asking herself, “What is he thinking of?” for women possess in an eminent degree the art of reading thoughts from the play of countenance. She divined the instigations of the great-aunt in the embarrassed glance and the agitated tone of voice which betrayed an inward struggle in Paul’s mind.

“At last,” she thought to herself, “the fatal day has come; the crisis begins—how will it end? My notary is Monsieur Solonet,” she said, after a pause. “Yours, I think you said, is Monsieur Mathias; I will invite them to dinner to-morrow, and they can come to an understanding then. It is their business to conciliate our interests without our interference; just as good cooks are expected to furnish good food without instructions.”

“Yes, you are right,” said Paul, letting a faint sigh of relief escape him.

By a singular transposition of parts, Paul, innocent of all wrong-doing, trembled, while Madame Évangélista, though a prey to the utmost anxiety, was outwardly calm.

The widow owed her daughter one-third of the fortune left by Monsieur Évangélista, — namely, nearly twelve hundred thousand francs, — and she knew herself unable to pay it, even by taking the whole of her property to do so. She would therefore be placed at the mercy of a son-in-law. Though she might be able to control Paul if left to himself, would he, when enlightened by his notary, agree to release her from rendering her account as guardian of her daughter's patrimony? If Paul withdrew his proposals all Bordeaux would know the reason and Natalie's future marriage would be made impossible. This mother, who desired the happiness of her daughter, this woman, who from infancy had lived honorably, was aware that on the morrow she must become dishonest. Like those great warriors who fain would blot from their lives the moment when they had felt a secret cowardice, she ardently desired to cut this inevitable day from the record of hers. Most assuredly some hairs on her head must have whitened during the night, when, face to face with facts, she bitterly regretted her extravagance as she felt the hard necessities of the situation.

Among these necessities was that of confiding the truth to her notary, for whom she sent in the morning as soon as she rose. She was forced to reveal to him a secret defaulting she had never been willing to admit to herself, for she had steadily advanced to the abyss, relying on some chance accident, which never hap

pened, to relieve her. There rose in her soul a feeling against Paul, that was neither dislike, nor aversion, nor anything, as yet, unkind; but *he* was the cause of this crisis; the opposing party in this secret suit; he became, without knowing it, an innocent enemy she was forced to conquer. What human being did ever yet love his or her dupe? Compelled to deceive and trick him if she could, the Spanish woman resolved, like other women, to put her whole force of character into the struggle, the dishonor of which could be absolved by victory only.

In the stillness of the night she excused her conduct to her own mind by a tissue of arguments in which her pride predominated. Natalie had shared the benefit of her extravagance. There was not a single base or ignoble motive in what she had done. She was no accountant, but was that a crime, a delinquency? A man was only too lucky to obtain a wife like Natalie without a penny. Such a treasure bestowed upon him might surely release her from a guardianship account. How many men had bought the women they loved by greater sacrifices? Why should a man do less for a wife than for a mistress? Besides, Paul was a nullity, a man of no force, incapable; she would spend the best resources of her mind upon him and open to him a fine career; he should owe his future power and position to her influence; in that way she could pay her debt. He would indeed be a fool to refuse such a future; and for what? a few paltry thousands, more or less. He would be infamous if he withdrew for such a reason.

"But," she added, to herself, "if the negotiation does not succeed at once, I shall leave Bordeaux. I

can still find a good marriage for Natalie by investing the proceeds of what is left, house and diamonds and furniture, — keeping only a small income for myself.”

When a strong soul constructs a way of ultimate escape, — as Richelieu did at Brouage, — and holds in reserve a vigorous end, the resolution becomes a lever which strengthens its immediate way. The thought of this finale in case of failure comforted Madame Évangélista, who fell asleep with all the more confidence as she remembered her assistant in the coming duel.

This was a young man named Solonet, considered the ablest notary in Bordeaux; now twenty-seven years of age and decorated with the Legion of honor for having actively contributed to the second return of the Bourbons. Proud and happy to be received in the home of Madame Évangélista, less as a notary than as belonging to the royalist society of Bordeaux, Solonet had conceived for that fine setting sun one of those passions which women like Madame Évangélista repulse, although flattered and graciously allowing them to exist upon the surface. Solonet remained therefore in a self-satisfied condition of hope and becoming respect. Being sent for, he arrived the next morning with the promptitude of a slave and was received by the coquetish widow in her bedroom, where she allowed him to find her in a very becoming dishabille.

“Can I,” she said, “count upon your discretion and your entire devotion in a discussion which will take place in my house this evening? You will readily understand that it relates to the marriage of my daughter.”

The young man expended himself in gallant protestations.

“Now to the point,” she said.

“I am listening,” he replied, checking his ardor.

Madame Évangélista then stated her position baldly.

“My dear lady, that is nothing to be troubled about,” said Maître Solonet, assuming a confident air as soon as his client had given him the exact figures. “The question is how have you conducted yourself toward Monsieur de Manerville? In this matter questions of manner and deportment are of greater importance than those of law and finance.”

Madame Évangélista wrapped herself in dignity. The notary learned to his satisfaction that until the present moment his client's relations to Paul had been distant and reserved, and that partly from native pride and partly from involuntary shrewdness she had treated the Comte de Manerville as in some sense her inferior and as though it were an honor for him to be allowed to marry Mademoiselle Évangélista. She assured Solonet that neither she nor her daughter could be suspected of any mercenary interests in the marriage; that they had the right, should Paul make any financial difficulties, to retreat from the affair to an illimitable distance; and finally, that she had already acquired over her future son-in-law a very remarkable ascendancy.

“If that is so,” said Solonet, “tell me what are the utmost concessions you are willing to make.”

“I wish to make as few as possible,” she answered, laughing.

“A woman's answer,” cried Solonet. “Madame, are you anxious to marry Mademoiselle Natalie?”

“ Yes.”

“ And you want a receipt for the eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand francs, for which you are responsible on the guardianship account which the law obliges you to render to your son-in-law? ”

“ Yes.”

“ How much do you want to keep back? ”

“ Thirty thousand a year, at least.”

“ It is a question of conquer or die, is it? ”

“ It is.”

“ Well, then, I must reflect on the necessary means to that end; it will need all our cleverness to manage our forces. I will give you some instructions on my arrival this evening; follow them carefully, and I think I may promise you a successful issue. Is the Comte de Manerville in love with Mademoiselle Natalie? ” he asked as he rose to take leave.

“ He adores her.”

“ That is not enough. Does he desire her to the point of disregarding all pecuniary difficulties? ”

“ Yes.”

“ That’s what I call having a lien upon a daughter’s property,” cried the notary. “ Make her look her best to-night,” he added with a sly glance.

“ She has a most charming dress for the occasion.”

“ The marriage-contract dress is, in my opinion, half the battle,” said Solonet.

This last argument seemed so cogent to Madame Évangélista that she superintended Natalie’s toilet herself, as much perhaps to watch her daughter as to make her the innocent accomplice of her financial conspiracy.

With her hair dressed à la Sévigné and wearing a gown of white tulle adorned with pink ribbons, Natalie seemed to her mother so beautiful as to guarantee victory. When the lady's-maid left the room and Madame Évangélista was certain that no one could overhear her, she arranged a few curls on her daughter's head by way of exordium.

"Dear child," she said, in a voice that was firm apparently, "do you sincerely love the Comte de Manerville?"

Mother and daughter cast strange looks at each other.

"Why do you ask that question, little mother? and to-day more than yesterday? Why have you thrown me with him?"

"If you and I had to part forever would you still persist in the marriage?"

"I should give it up—and I should not die of grief."

"You do not love him, my dear," said the mother, kissing her daughter's forehead.

"But why, my dear mother, are you playing the Grand Inquisitor?"

"I wished to know if you desired the marriage without being madly in love with the husband."

"I love him."

"And you are right. He is a count; we will make him a peer of France between us; nevertheless, there are certain difficulties."

"Difficulties between persons who love each other? Oh, no. The heart of the Pink of Fashion is too firmly planted here," she said, with a pretty gesture,

“to make the very slightest objection. I am sure of that.”

“But suppose it were otherwise?” persisted Madame Évangélista.

“He would be profoundly and forever forgotten,” replied Natalie.

“Good! You are a Casa-Reale. But suppose, though he madly loves you, suppose certain discussions and difficulties should arise, not of his own making, but which he must decide in your interests as well as in mine — hey, Natalie, what then? Without lowering your dignity, perhaps a little softness in your manner might decide him — a word, a tone, a mere nothing. Men are so made; they resist a serious argument, but they yield to a tender look.”

“I understand! a little touch to make my Favori leap the barrier,” said Natalie, making the gesture of striking a horse with her whip.

“My darling! I ask nothing that resembles seduction. You and I have sentiments of the old Castilian honor which will never permit us to pass certain limits. Count Paul shall know our situation.”

“What situation?”

“You would not understand it. But I tell you now that if after seeing you in all your glory his look betrays the slightest hesitation, — and I shall watch him, — on that instant I will break off the marriage; I will liquidate my property, leave Bordeaux, and go to Douai, to be near the Claës. Madame Claës is our relation through the Temnincks. Then I’ll marry you to a peer of France, and take refuge in a convent myself, that I may give up to you my whole fortune.”

“Mother, what am I to do to prevent such misfortunes?” cried Natalie.

“I have never seen you so beautiful as you are now,” replied her mother. “Be a little coquettish, and all is well.”

Madame Évangélista left Natalie to her thoughts, and went to arrange her own toilet in a way that would bear comparison with that of her daughter. If Natalie ought to make herself attractive to Paul she ought, none the less, to inflame the ardor of her champion Solonet. The mother and daughter were therefore under arms when Paul arrived, bearing the bouquet which for the last few months he had daily offered to his love. All three conversed pleasantly while awaiting the arrival of the notaries.

This day brought to Paul the first skirmish of that long and wearisome warfare called marriage. It is therefore necessary to state the forces on both sides, the position of the belligerent bodies, and the ground on which they are about to manœuvre.

To maintain a struggle, the importance of which had wholly escaped him, Paul’s only auxiliary was the old notary, Mathias. Both were about to be confronted, unaware and defenceless, by a most unexpected circumstance; to be pressed by an enemy whose strategy was planned, and driven to decide on a course without having time to reflect upon it. Where is the man who would not have succumbed, even though assisted by Cujas and Barthole? How should he look for deceit and treachery where all seemed compliant and natural? What could old Mathias do alone against Madame Évangélista, against Solonet, against Natalie, espe-

cially when a client in love goes over to the enemy as soon as the rising conflict threatens his happiness? Already Paul was damaging his cause by making the customary lover's speeches, to which his passion gave excessive value in the ears of Madame Évangélista, whose object it was to drive him to commit himself.

The matrimonial *condottieri* now about to fight for their clients, whose personal powers were to be so vitally important in this solemn encounter, the two notaries, in short, represent individually the old and the new systems, — old-fashioned notarial usage, and the new-fangled modern procedure.

Maitre Mathias was a worthy old gentleman sixty-nine years of age, who took great pride in his forty years' exercise of the profession. His huge gouty feet were encased in shoes with silver buckles, making a ridiculous termination to legs so spindling, with knees so bony, that when he crossed them they made you think of the emblems on a tombstone. His puny little thighs, lost in a pair of wide black breeches fastened with buckles, seemed to bend beneath the weight of a round stomach and a torso developed, like that of most sedentary persons, into a stout barrel, always buttoned into a green coat with square tails, which no man could remember to have ever seen new. His hair, well brushed and powdered, was tied in a rat's tail that lay between the collar of his coat and that of his waistcoat, which was white, with a pattern of flowers. With his round head, his face the color of a vine-leaf, his blue eyes, a trumpet nose, a thick-lipped mouth, and a double chin, the dear old fellow excited, whenever he appeared among strangers who did not

know him, that satirical laugh which Frenchmen so generously bestow on the ludicrous creations Dame Nature occasionally allows herself, which Art delights in exaggerating under the name of caricatures.

But in Maitre Mathias, mind had triumphed over form; the qualities of his soul had vanquished the oddities of his body. The inhabitants of Bordeaux, as a rule, testified a friendly respect and a deference that was full of esteem for him. The old man's voice went to their hearts and sounded there with the eloquence of uprightness. His craft consisted in going straight to the fact, overturning all subterfuge and evil devices by plain questionings. His quick perception, his long training in his profession gave him that divining sense which goes to the depths of conscience and reads its secret thoughts. Though grave and deliberate in business, the patriarch could be gay with the gayety of our ancestors. He could risk a song after dinner, enjoy all family festivities, celebrate the birthdays of grandmothers and children, and bury with due solemnity the Christmas log. He loved to send presents at New Year, and eggs at Easter: he believed in the duties of a godfather, and never deserted the customs which colored the life of the olden time. Maitre Mathias was a noble and venerable relic of the notaries, obscure great men, who gave no receipt for the millions intrusted to them, but returned those millions in the sacks they were delivered in, tied with the same twine; men who fulfilled their trusts to the letter, drew honest inventories, took fatherly interest in their clients, often barring the way to extravagance and dissipation, — men to whom families confided their secrets, and who

felt so responsible for any error in their deeds that they meditated long and carefully over them. Never during his whole notarial life, had any client found reason to complain of a bad investment or an ill-placed mortgage. His own fortune, slowly but honorably acquired, had come to him as the result of a thirty years' practice and careful economy. He had established in life fourteen of his clerks. Religious, and generous in secret, Mathias was found wherever good was to be done without remuneration. An active member on hospital and other benevolent committees, he subscribed the largest sums to relieve all sudden misfortunes and emergencies, as well as to create certain useful permanent institutions; consequently, neither he nor his wife kept a carriage. Also his word was felt to be sacred, and his coffers held as much of the money of others as a bank; and also, we may add, he went by the name of "Our good Monsieur Mathias," and when he died, three thousand persons followed him to his grave.

Solonet was the style of young notary who comes in humming a tune, affects light-heartedness, declares that business is better done with a laugh than seriously. He is the notary captain of the national guard, who dislikes to be taken for a notary, solicits the cross of the Legion of honor, keeps his cabriolet, and leaves the verification of his deeds to his clerks; he is the notary who goes to balls and theatres, buys pictures and plays at *écarté*; he has coffers in which gold is received on deposit and is later returned in bank-bills, — a notary who follows his epoch, risks capital in doubtful investments, speculates with all he can lay his

hands on, and expects to retire with an income of thirty thousand francs after ten years' practice; in short, the notary whose cleverness comes of his duplicity, whom many men fear as an accomplice possessing their secrets, and who sees in his practice a means of ultimately marrying some blue-stockinged heiress.

When the slender, fair-haired Solonet, curled, perfumed, and booted like the leading gentleman at the Vaudeville, and dressed like a dandy whose most important business is a duel, entered Madame Évangélista's salon, preceding his brother notary, whose advance was delayed by a twinge of the gout, the two men presented to the life one of those famous caricatures entitled "Former Times and the Present Day," which had such eminent success under the Empire. If Madame and Mademoiselle Évangélista to whom the "good Monsieur Mathias," was personally unknown, felt, on first seeing him, a slight inclination to laugh, they were soon touched by the old-fashioned grace with which he greeted them. The words he used were full of that amenity which amiable old men convey as much by the ideas they suggest as by the manner in which they express them. The younger notary, with his flippant tone, seemed on a lower plane. Mathias showed his superior knowledge of life by the reserved manner with which he accosted Paul. Without compromising his white hairs, he showed that he respected the young man's nobility, while at the same time he claimed the honor due to old age, and made it felt that social rights are mutual. Solonet's bow and greeting, on the contrary, expressed a sense of perfect equality, which would naturally affront the pretensions of a man

of society and make the notary ridiculous in the eyes of a real noble. Solonet made a motion, somewhat too familiar, to Madame Évangélista, inviting her to a private conference in the recess of a window. For some minutes they talked to each other in a low voice, giving way now and then to laughter, — no doubt to lessen in the minds of others the importance of the conversation, in which Solonet was really communicating to his sovereign lady the plan of battle.

“But,” he said, as he ended, “will you have the courage to sell your house?”

“Undoubtedly,” she replied.

Madame Évangélista did not choose to tell her notary the motive of this heroism, which struck him greatly. Solonet’s zeal might have cooled had he known that his client was really intending to leave Bordeaux. She had not as yet said anything about that intention to Paul, in order not to alarm him with the preliminary steps and circumlocutions which must be taken before he entered on the political life she planned for him.

After dinner the two plenipotentiaries left the loving pair with the mother, and betook themselves to an adjoining salon where their conference was arranged to take place. A dual scene then followed on this domestic stage: in the chimney-corner of the great salon a scene of love, in which to all appearance life was smiles and joy; in the other room, a scene of gravity and gloom, where selfish interests, baldly proclaimed, openly took the part they play in life under flowery disguises.

“My dear master,” said Solonet, “the document can remain under your lock and key; I know very well what

I owe to my old preceptor." Mathias bowed gravely. "But," continued Solonet, unfolding the rough copy of a deed he had made his clerk draw up, "as we are the oppressed party, I mean the daughter, I have written the contract—which will save you trouble. We marry with our rights under the rule of community of interests; with general donation of our property to each other in case of death without heirs; if not, donation of one-fourth as life interest, and one-fourth in fee; the sum placed in community of interests to be one-fourth of the respective property of each party; the survivor to possess the furniture without appraisal. It's all as simple as how d' ye do."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta," said Mathias, "I don't do business as one sings a tune. What are your claims?"

"What are yours?" said Solonet.

"Our property" replied Mathias, "is: the estate of Lanstrac, which brings in a rental of twenty-three thousand francs a year, not counting the natural products. *Item*: the farms of Grassol and Gaudet, each worth three thousand six hundred francs a year. *Item*: the vineyard of Belle-Rose, yielding in ordinary years sixteen thousand francs; total, forty-six thousand two hundred francs a year. *Item*: the patrimonial mansion at Bordeaux taxed for nine hundred francs. *Item*: a handsome house, between court and garden in Paris, rue de la Pépinière, taxed for fifteen hundred francs. These pieces of property, the title-deeds of which I hold, are derived from our father and mother, except the house in Paris, which we bought ourselves. We must also reckon in the furniture of the two houses, and that of the château of Lanstrac,

estimated at four hundred and fifty thousand francs. There's the table, the cloth, and the first course. What do you bring for the second course and the dessert?"

"Our rights," replied Solonet.

"Specify them, my friend," said Mathias. "What do you bring us? Where is the inventory of the property left by Monsieur Évangélista? Show me the liquidation, the investment of the amount. Where is your capital?—if there is any capital. Where is your landed property?—if you have any. In short, let us see your guardianship account, and tell us what you bring and what your mother will secure to us."

"Does Monsieur le Comte de Manerville love Mademoiselle Évangélista?"

"He wishes to make her his wife if the marriage can be suitably arranged," said the old notary. "I am not a child; this matter concerns our business, and not our feelings."

"The marriage will be off unless you show generous feeling; and for this reason," continued Solonet. "No inventory was made at the death of our husband; we are Spaniards, creoles, and know nothing of French laws. Besides, we were too deeply grieved at our loss to think at such a time of the miserable formalities which occupy cold hearts. It is publicly well known that our late husband adored us, and that we mourned for him sincerely. If we did have a settlement of accounts with a short inventory attached, made, as one may say, by common report, you can thank our surrogate guardian, who obliged us to establish a status and assign to our daughter a fortune, such as it is, at a

time when we were forced to withdraw from London our English securities, the capital of which was immense, and re-invest the proceeds in Paris, where interests were doubled."

"Don't talk nonsense to me. There are various ways of verifying the property. What was the amount of your legacy tax? Those figures will enable us to get at the total. Come to the point. Tell us frankly what you received from the father's estate and how much remains of it. If we are very much in love we'll see then what we can do."

"If you are marrying us for our money you can go about your business. We have claims to more than a million; but all that remains to our mother is this house and furniture and four hundred odd thousand francs invested about 1817 in the Five-per-cents, which yield about forty thousand francs a year."

"Then why do you live in a style that requires one hundred thousand a year at the least?" cried Mathias, horror-stricken.

"Our daughter has cost us the eyes out of our head," replied Solonet, "Besides, we like to spend money. Your jeremiads, let me tell you, won't recover two farthings of the money."

"With the fifty thousand francs a year which belonged to Mademoiselle Natalie you could have brought her up handsomely without coming to ruin. But if you have squandered everything while you were a girl what will it be when you a married woman?"

"Then drop us altogether," said Solonet, "The handsomest girl in Bordeaux has a right to spend more than she has, if she likes."

"I'll talk to my client about that," said the old notary.

"Very good, old father Cassandra, go and tell your client that we haven't a penny," thought Solonet, who, in the solitude of his study, had strategically massed his forces, drawn up his propositions, manned the drawbridge of discussion, and prepared the point at which the opposing party, thinking the affair a failure, could suddenly be led into a compromise which would end in the triumph of his client.

The white dress with its rose-colored ribbons, the Sévigné curls, Natalie's tiny foot, her winning glance, her pretty fingers constantly employed in adjusting curls that needed no adjustment, these girlish manœuvres like those of a peacock spreading his tail, had brought Paul to the point at which his future mother-in-law desired to see him. He was intoxicated with love, and his eyes, the sure thermometer of the soul, indicated the degree of passion at which a man commits a thousand follies.

"Natalie is so beautiful," he whispered to the mother, "that I can conceive the frenzy which leads a man to pay for his happiness by death."

Madame Évangélista replied with a shake of her head: —

"Lover's talk, my dear count. My husband never said such charming things to me; but he married me without a fortune and for thirteen years he never caused me one moment's pain."

"Is that a lesson you are giving me?" said Paul, laughing.

"You know how I love you, my dear son," she

answered, pressing his hand. "I must indeed love you well to give you my Natalie."

"Give me, give me?" said the young girl, waving a screen of Indian feathers, "what are you whispering about me?"

"I was telling her," replied Paul, "how much I love you, since etiquette forbids me to tell it to you."

"Why?"

"I fear to say too much."

"Ah! you know too well how to offer the jewels of flattery. Shall I tell you my private opinion about you? Well, I think you have more mind than a lover ought to have. To be the Pink of Fashion and a wit as well," she added, dropping her eyes, "is to have too many advantages: a man should choose between them. I fear too, myself."

"And why?"

"We must not talk in this way. Mamma, do you not think that this conversation is dangerous inasmuch as the contract is not yet signed?"

"It soon will be," said Paul.

"I should like to know what Achilles and Nestor are saying to each other in the next room," said Natalie, nodding toward the door of the little salon with a childlike expression of curiosity.

"They are talking of our children and our death and a lot of other such trifles; they are counting our gold to see if we can keep five horses in the stables. They are talking also of deeds of gift; but there, I have forestalled them."

"How so?"

"Have I not given myself wholly to you?" he said,

looking straight at the girl, whose beauty was enhanced by the blush which the pleasure of this answer brought to her face.

“Mamma, how can I acknowledge so much generosity.”

“My dear child, you have a lifetime before you in which to return it. To make the daily happiness of a home, is to bring a treasure into it. I had no other fortune when I married.”

“Do you like Lanstrac?” asked Paul, addressing Natalie.

“How could I fail to like the place where you were born?” she replied. “I wish I could see your house.”

“*Our* house,” said Paul. “Do you not want to know if I shall understand your tastes and arrange the house to suit you? Your mother had made a husband’s task most difficult; you have always been so happy! But where love is infinite, nothing is impossible.”

“My dear children,” said Madame Évangélista, “do you feel willing to stay in Bordeaux after your marriage? If you have the courage to face the people here who know you and will watch and hamper you, so be it! But if you feel that desire for a solitude together which can hardly be expressed, let us go to Paris where the life of a young couple can pass unnoticed in the stream. There alone you can behave as lovers without fearing to seem ridiculous.”

“You are quite right,” said Paul, “but I shall hardly have time to get my house ready. However, I will write to-night to de Marsay, the friend on whom I can always count to get things done for me.”

At the moment when Paul, like all young men accustomed to satisfy their desires without previous calculation, was inconsiderately binding himself to the expenses of a stay in Paris, Maitre Mathias entered the salon and made a sign to his client that he wished to speak to him.

“What is it, my friend?” asked Paul, following the old man to the recess of a window.

“Monsieur le comte,” said the honest lawyer, “there is not a penny of dowry. My advice is: put off the conference to another day, so that you may gain time to consider your proper course.”

“Monsieur Paul,” said Natalie, “I have a word to say in private to you.”

Though Madame Évangélista's face was calm, no Jew of the middle ages ever suffered greater torture in his caldron of boiling oil than she was enduring in her violet velvet gown. Solonet had pledged the marriage to her, but she was ignorant of the means and conditions of success. The anguish of this uncertainty was intolerable. Possibly she owed her safety to her daughter's disobedience. Natalie had considered the advice of her mother and noticed her anxiety. When she saw the success of her own coquetry she was struck to the heart with a variety of contradictory thoughts. Without blaming her mother, she was half-ashamed of manœuvres the object of which was, undoubtedly, some personal game. She was also seized with a jealous curiosity which is easily conceived. She wanted to find out if Paul loved her well enough to rise above the obstacles that her mother foresaw and which she now saw clouding the face of the old lawyer. These

ideas and sentiments prompted her to an action of loyalty which became her well. But, for all that, the blackest perfidy could not have been as dangerous as her present innocence.

"Paul," she said in a low voice, and she so called him for the first time, "if any difficulties as to property arise to separate us, remember that I free you from all engagements, and will allow you to let the blame of such a rupture rest on me."

She put such dignity into this expression of her generosity that Paul believed in her disinterestedness and in her ignorance of the strange fact that his notary had just told to him. He pressed the young girl's hand and kissed it like a man to whom love is more precious than wealth. Natalie left the room.

"*Sac-à-papier!* Monsieur le comte, you are committing a great folly," said the old notary, rejoining his client.

Paul grew thoughtful. He had expected to unite Natalie's fortune with his own and thus obtain for his married life an income of one hundred thousand francs a year; and however much a man may be in love he cannot pass without emotion and anxiety from the prospect of a hundred thousand to the certainty of forty-six thousand francs a year and the duty of providing for a woman accustomed to every luxury.

"My daughter is no longer here," said Madame Évangélista, advancing almost regally toward her son-in-law and his notary. "May I be told what is happening?"

"Madame," replied Mathias, alarmed at Paul's silence, "an obstacle which I fear will delay us has arisen —"

At these words, Maître Solonet issued from the little salon and cut short the old man's speech by a remark which restored Paul's composure. Overcome by the remembrance of his gallant speeches and his lover-like behavior, he felt unable to disown them or to change his course. He longed, for the moment, to fling himself into a gulf; Solonet's words relieved him.

"There is a way," said the younger notary, with an easy air, "by which madame can meet the payment which is due to her daughter. Madame Évangélista possesses forty thousand francs a year from an investment in the Five-per cents, the capital of which will soon be at par, if not above it. We may therefore reckon it at eight hundred thousand francs. This house and garden are fully worth two hundred thousand. On that estimate, Madame can convey by the marriage contract the titles of that property to her daughter, reserving only a life interest in it — for I conclude that Monsieur le comte could hardly wish to leave his mother-in-law without means? Though Madame has certainly run through her fortune, she is still able to make good that of her daughter, or very nearly so."

"Women are most unfortunate in having no knowledge of business," said Madame Évangélista. "Have I titles to property? and what are life-interests?"

Paul was in a sort of ecstasy as he listened to the proposed arrangement. The old notary, seeing the trap, and his client with one foot caught in it, was petrified for a moment, as he said to himself: —

"I am certain they are tricking us."

"If madame will follow my advice," said Solonet, "she will secure her own tranquillity. By sacrificing herself in this way she may be sure that no minors will ultimately harass her — for we never know who may live and who may die! Monsieur le comte will then give due acknowledgment in the marriage contract of having received the sum total of Mademoiselle Évangélista's patrimonial inheritance."

Mathias could not restrain the indignation which shone in his eyes and flushed his face.

"And that sum," he said, shaking, "is —"

"One million, one hundred and fifty-six thousand francs according to the document —"

"Why don't you ask Monsieur le comte to make over *hic et nunc* his whole fortune to his future wife?" said Mathias. "It would be more honest than what you now propose. I will not allow the ruin of the Comte de Manerville to take place under my very eyes —"

He made a step as if to address his client, who was silent throughout this scene as if dazed by it; but he turned and said, addressing Madame Évangélista: —

"Do not suppose, madame, that I think you a party to these ideas of my brother notary. I consider you an honest woman and a lady who knows nothing of business."

"Thank you, brother notary," said Solonet.

"You know that there can be no offence between you and me," replied Mathias. "Madame," he added, "you ought to know the result of this proposed arrangement. You are still young and beautiful enough to marry again — Ah! madame," said the old man,

noting her gesture, "who can answer for themselves on that point?"

"I did not suppose, monsieur," said Madame Évangélista, "that, after remaining a widow for the seven best years of my life, and refusing the most brilliant offers for my daughter's sake, I should be suspected of such a piece of folly as marrying again at thirty-nine years of age. If we were not talking business I should regard your suggestion as an impertinence."

"Would it not be more impertinent if I suggested that you could not marry again?"

"Can and will are separate terms," remarked Solonet, gallantly.

"Well," resumed Maître Mathias, "we will say nothing of your marriage. You may, and we all desire it, live for forty-five years to come. Now, if you keep for yourself the life-interest in your daughter's patrimony, your children are laid on the shelf for the best years of their lives."

"What does that mean?" said the widow. "I don't understand being laid on a shelf."

Solonet, the man of elegance and good taste, began to laugh.

"I'll translate it for you," said Mathias. "If your children are wise they will think of the future. To think of the future means laying by half our income, provided we have only two children, to whom we are bound to give a fine education and a handsome dowry. Your daughter and son-in-law will, therefore, be reduced to live on twenty thousand francs a year, though each has spent fifty thousand while still unmarried. But that is nothing. The law obliges my

client to account, hereafter, to his children for the eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand francs of their mother's patrimony; yet he may not have received them if his wife should die and madame should survive her, which may very well happen. To sign such a contract is to fling one's self into the river, bound hand and foot. You wish to make your daughter happy, do you not? If she loves her husband, a fact which notaries never doubt, she will share his troubles. Madame, I see enough in this scheme to make her die of grief and anxiety; you are consigning her to poverty. Yes, madame, poverty; to persons accustomed to the use of one hundred thousand francs a year, twenty thousand is poverty. Moreover, if Monsieur le comte, out of love for his wife, were guilty of extravagance, she could ruin him by exercising her rights when misfortunes overtook him. I plead now for you, for them, for their children, for every one."

"The old fellow makes a lot of smoke with his cannon," thought Maître Solonet, giving his client a look, which meant, "Keep on!"

"There is one way of combining all interests," replied Madame Évangélista, calmly. "I can reserve to myself only the necessary cost of living in a convent, and my children can have my property at once. I can renounce the world, if such anticipated death conduces to the welfare of my daughter."

"Madame," said the old notary, "let us take time to consider and weigh, deliberately, the course we had best pursue to conciliate all interests."

"Good heavens! monsieur," cried Madame Évangélista, who saw defeat in delay, "everything has

already been considered and weighed. I was ignorant of what the process of marriage is in France; I am a Spaniard and a creole. I did not know that in order to marry my daughter it was necessary to reckon up the days which God may still grant me; that my child would suffer because I live; that I do harm by living, and by having lived! When my husband married me I had nothing but my name and my person. My name alone was a fortune to him, which dwarfed his own. What wealth can equal that of a great name? My dowry was beauty, virtue, happiness, birth, education. Can money give those treasures? If Natalie's father could overhear this conversation, his generous soul would be wounded forever, and his happiness in paradise destroyed. I dissipated, foolishly, perhaps, a few of his millions without a quiver ever coming to his eyelids. Since his death, I have grown economical and orderly in comparison with the life he encouraged me to lead — Come, let us break this thing off! Monsieur de Mauerville is so disappointed that I — ”

No descriptive language can express the confusion and shock which the words, “break off,” introduced into the conversation. It is enough to say that these four apparently well-bred persons all talked at once.

“In Spain people marry in the Spanish fashion, or as they please; but in France they marry according to French law, sensibly, and as best they can,” said Mathias.

“Ah, madame,” cried Paul, coming out of his stupefaction, “you mistake my feelings.”

“This is not a matter of feeling,” said the old

notary, trying to stop his client from concessions. "We are concerned now with the interests and welfare of three generations. Have *we* wasted the missing millions? We are simply endeavoring to solve difficulties of which we are wholly guiltless."

"Marry us, and don't haggle," said Solonet.

"Haggle! do you call it haggling to defend the interests of father and mother and children?" said Mathias.

"Yes," said Paul, continuing his remarks to Madame Évangélista, "I deplore the extravagance of my youth, which does not permit me to stop this discussion, as you deplore your ignorance of business and your involuntary wastefulness. God is my witness that I am not thinking, at this moment, of myself. A simple life at Lanstrac does not alarm me; but how can I ask Mademoiselle Natalie to renounce her tastes, her habits? Her very existence would be changed."

"Where did Évangélista get his millions?" said the widow.

"Monsieur Évangélista was in business," replied the old notary; "he played in the great game of commerce; he despatched ships and made enormous sums; we are simply a landowner, whose capital is invested, whose income is fixed."

"There is still a way to harmonize all interests," said Solonet, uttering this sentence in a high falsetto tone, which silenced the other three and drew their eyes and their attention upon himself.

This young man was not unlike a skilful coachman who holds the reins of four horses, and amuses himself

by first exciting his animals and then subduing them. He had let loose these passions, and then, in turn, he calmed them, making Paul, whose life and happiness were in the balance, sweat in his harness, as well as his own client, who could not clearly see her way through this involved discussion.

“Madame Évangélista,” he continued, after a slight pause, “can resign her investment in the Five-percents at once, and she can sell this house. I can get three hundred thousand for it by cutting the land into small lots. Out of that sum she can give you one hundred and fifty thousand francs. In this way she pays down nine hundred thousand of her daughter’s patrimony, immediately. That, to be sure, is not all that she owes her daughter, but where will you find, in France, a better dowry?”

“Very good,” said Maître Mathias; “but what, then, becomes of madame?”

At this question, which appeared to imply consent, Solonet said, softly, to himself, “Well done, old fox! I’ve caught you!”

“Madame,” he replied, aloud, “will keep the hundred and fifty thousand francs remaining from the sale of the house. This sum, added to the value of her furniture, can be invested in an annuity which will give her twenty thousand francs a year. Monsieur le comte can arrange to provide a residence for her under his roof. Lanstrac is a large house. You have also a house in Paris,” he went on, addressing himself to Paul. “Madame can, therefore, live with you wherever you are. A widow with twenty thousand francs a year, and no household to maintain, is richer than

madame was when she possessed her whole fortune. Madame Évangélista has only this one daughter; Monsieur le comte is without relations; it will be many years before your heirs attain their majority; no conflict of interests is, therefore, to be feared. A mother-in-law and a son-in-law placed in such relations will form a household of united interests. Madame Évangélista can make up for the remaining deficit by paying a certain sum for her support from her annuity, which will ease your way. We know that madame is too generous and too large-minded to be willing to be a burden on her children. In this way you can make one household, united and happy, and be able to spend, in your own right, one hundred thousand francs a year. Is not that sum sufficient, Monsieur le comte, to enjoy, in all countries, the luxuries of life, and to satisfy all your wants and caprices? Believe me, a young couple often feel the need of a third member of the household; and, I ask you, what third member could be so desirable as a good mother?"

"A little paradise!" exclaimed the old notary.

Shocked to see his client's joy at this proposal, Mathias sat down on an ottoman, his head in his hands, plunged in reflections that were evidently painful. He knew well the involved phraseology in which notaries and lawyers wrap up, intentionally, malicious schemes, and he was not the man to be taken in by it. He now began, furtively, to watch his brother notary and Madame Évangélista as they conversed with Paul, endeavoring to detect some clew to the deep-laid plot which was beginning to appear upon the surface.

"Monsieur," said Paul to Solonet, "I thank you for the pains you take to conciliate our interests. This arrangement will solve all difficulties far more happily than I expected — if," he added, turning to Madame Évangélista, "it is agreeable to you, madame; for I could not desire anything that did not equally please you."

"I?" she said; "all that makes the happiness of my children is joy to me. Do not consider me in any way."

"That would not be right," said Paul, eagerly. "If your future is not honorably provided for, Natalie and I would suffer more than you would suffer for yourself."

"Don't be uneasy, Monsieur le comte," interposed Solonet.

"Ah!" thought old Mathias, "they'll make him kiss the rod before they scourge him."

"You may feel quite satisfied," continued Solonet. "There are so many enterprises going on in Bordeaux at this moment that investments for annuities can be negotiated on very advantageous terms. After deducting from the proceeds of the house and furniture the hundred and fifty thousand francs we owe you, I think I can guarantee to madame that two hundred and fifty thousand will remain to her. I take upon myself to invest that sum in a first mortgage on property worth a million, and to obtain ten per cent for it, — twenty-five thousand francs a year. Consequently, we are marrying on nearly equal fortunes. In fact, against your forty-six thousand francs a year, Mademoiselle Natalie brings you forty thousand a year in the Five-

per-cents, and one hundred and fifty thousand in a round sum, which gives, in all, forty-seven thousand francs a year."

"That is evident," said Paul.

As he ended his speech, Solonet had cast a sidelong glance at his client, intercepted by Mathias, which meant: "Bring up your reserves."

"But," exclaimed Madame Évangélista, in tones of joy that did not seem to be feigned, "I can give Natalie my diamonds; they are worth, at least, a hundred thousand francs."

"We can have them appraised," said the notary. "This will change the whole face of things. Madame can then keep the proceeds of her house, all but fifty thousand francs. Nothing will prevent Monsieur le comte from giving us a receipt in due form, as having received, in full, Mademoiselle Natalie's inheritance from her father; this will close, of course, the guardianship account. If madame, with Spanish generosity, robs herself in this way to fulfil her obligations, the least that her children can do is to give her a full receipt."

"Nothing could be more just than that," said Paul. "I am simply overwhelmed by these generous proposals."

"My daughter is another myself," said Madame Évangélista, softly.

Maitre Mathias detected a look of joy on her face when she saw that the difficulties were being removed: that joy, and the previous forgetfulness of the diamonds which were now brought forward like fresh troops, confirmed his suspicions.

"The scene has been prepared between them as gamblers prepare the cards to ruin a pigeon," thought the old notary. "Is this poor boy, whom I saw born, doomed to be plucked alive by that woman, roasted by his very love, and devoured by his wife? I, who have nursed these fine estates for years with such care, am I to see them ruined in a single night? Three million and a half to be hypothecated for eleven hundred thousand francs these women will force him to squander!"

Discovering thus in the soul of the elder woman intentions which, without involving crime, theft, swindling, or any actually evil or blameworthy action, nevertheless belonged to all those criminalities in embryo, Maître Mathias felt neither sorrow nor generous indignation. He was not the Misanthrope; he was an old notary, accustomed in his business to the shrewd calculations of worldly people, to those clever bits of treachery which do more fatal injury than open murder on the high-road committed by some poor devil, who is guillotined in consequence. To the upper classes of society these passages in life, these diplomatic meetings and discussions are like the necessary cesspools where the filth of life is thrown. Full of pity for his client, Mathias cast a foreseeing eye into the future and saw nothing good.

"We'll take the field with the same weapons," thought he, "and beat them."

At this moment, Paul, Solonet and Madame Évangélista, becoming embarrassed by the old man's silence, felt that the approval of that censor was necessary to carry out the transaction, and all three turned to him simultaneously.

"Well, my dear Monsieur Mathias, what do you think of it?" said Paul.

"This is what I think," said the conscientious and uncompromising notary. "You are not rich enough to commit such regal folly. The estate of Lanstrac, if estimated at three per cent on its rentals, represents, with its furniture, one million; the farms of Grassol and Guadet and your vineyard of Belle-Rose are worth another million; your two houses in Bordeaux and Paris, with their furniture, a third million. Against these three millions, yielding forty-seven thousand francs a year, Mademoiselle Natalie brings eight hundred thousand francs in the Five-per-cents, the diamonds (supposing them to be worth a hundred thousand francs, which is still problematical) and fifty thousand francs in money; in all, one million and fifty thousand francs. In presence of such facts my brother notary tells you boastfully that we are marrying equal fortunes! He expects us to encumber ourselves with a debt of eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand francs to our children by acknowledging the receipt of our wife's patrimony, when we have actually received but little more than a doubtful million. You are listening to such stuff with the rapture of a lover, and you think that old Mathias, who is not in love, can forget arithmetic, and will not point out the difference between landed estate, the actual value of which is enormous and constantly increasing, and the revenues of personal property, the capital of which is subject to fluctuations and diminishment of income. I am old enough to have learned that money dwindles and land augments. You have called me in, Monsieur

le comte, to stipulate for your interests; either let me defend those interests, or dismiss me."

"If monsieur is seeking a fortune equal in capital to his own," said Solonet, "we certainly cannot give it to him. We do not possess three millions and a half; nothing can be more evident. While you can boast of your three overwhelming millions, we can only produce our one poor million, — a mere nothing in your eyes, though three times the dowry of an archduchess of Austria. Bonaparte received only two hundred and fifty thousand francs with Maria-Louisa."

"Maria-Louisa was the ruin of Bonaparte," muttered Mathias.

Natalie's mother caught the words.

"If my sacrifices are worth nothing," she cried, "I do not choose to continue such a discussion; I trust to the discretion of Monsieur le comte, and I renounce the honor of his hand for my daughter."

According to the strategy marked out by the younger notary, this battle of contending interests had now reached the point where victory was certain for Madame Évangélista. The mother-in-law had opened her heart, delivered up her property, and was therefore practically released as her daughter's guardian. The future husband, under pain of ignoring the laws of generous propriety and being false to love, ought now to accept these conditions previously planned, and cleverly led up to by Solonet and Madame Évangélista. Like the hands of a clock turned by mechanism, Paul came faithfully up to time.

"Madame!" he exclaimed, "is it possible you can think of breaking off the marriage?"

"Monsieur," she replied, "to whom am I accountable? To my daughter. When she is twenty-one years of age she will receive my guardianship account and release me. She will then possess a million, and can, if she likes, choose her husband among the sons of the peers of France. She is a daughter of the Casa-Reale."

"Madame is right," remarked Solonet. "Why should she be more hardly pushed to-day than she will be fourteen months hence? You ought not to deprive her of the benefits of her maternity."

"Mathias!" cried Paul, in deep distress, "there are two sorts of ruin, and you are bringing one upon me at this moment."

He made a step toward the old notary, no doubt intending to tell him that the contract must be drawn at once. But Mathias stopped that disaster with a glance which said, distinctly, "Wait!" He saw the tears in Paul's eyes,—tears drawn from an honorable man by the shame of this discussion as much as by the peremptory speech of Madame Évangélista, threatening rupture, — and the old man stanchèd them with a gesture like that of Archimedes when he cried, "Eureka!" The words *peer of France* had been to him like a torch in a dark crypt.

Natalie appeared at this moment, dazzling as the dawn, saying, with infantine look and manner, "Am I in the way?"

"Singularity so, my child," answered her mother, in a bitter tone.

"Come in, dear Natalie," said Paul, taking her hand and leading her to a chair near the fireplace. "All is settled."

He felt it impossible to endure the overthrow of their mutual hopes.

"Yes, all can be settled," said Mathias, hastily interposing.

Like a general who, in a moment, upsets the plans skilfully laid and prepared by the enemy, the old notary, enlightened by that genius which presides over notaries, saw an idea, capable of saving the future of Paul and his children, unfolding itself in legal form before his eyes.

Maitre Solonet, who perceived no other way out of these irreconcilable difficulties than the resolution with which Paul's love inspired him, and to which this conflict of feelings and thwarted interests had brought him, was extremely surprised at the sudden exclamation of his brother-notary. Curious to know the remedy that Mathias had found in a state of things which had seemed to him beyond all other relief, he said, addressing the old man: —

"What is it you propose?"

"Natalie, my dear child, leave us," said Madame Évangélista.

"Mademoiselle is not in the way," replied Mathias, smiling. "I am going to speak in her interests as well as in those of Monsieur le comte."

Silence reigned for a moment, during which time everybody present, oppressed with anxiety, awaited the allocution of the venerable notary with unspeakable curiosity.

"In these days," continued Maitre Mathias, after a pause, "the profession of notary has changed from what it was. Political revolutions now exert an influ-

ence over the prospects of families, which never happened in former times. In those days existences were clearly defined; so were rank and position — ”

“We are not here for a lecture on political economy, but to draw up a marriage contract,” said Solonet, interrupting the old man, impatiently.

“I beg you to allow me to speak in my turn as I see fit,” replied the other.

Solonet turned away and sat down on the ottoman, saying, in a low voice, to Madame Évangélista: —

“You will now hear what we call in the profession *balderdash*.”

“Notaries are therefore compelled to follow the course of political events, which are now intimately connected with private interests. Here is an example: formerly noble families owned fortunes that were never shaken, but which the laws, promulgated by the Revolution, destroyed, and the present system tends to reconstruct,” resumed the old notary, yielding to the loquacity of the *tabellionaris boa-constrictor* (boa-notary). “Monsieur le comte by his name, his talents, and his fortune is called upon to sit some day in the elective Chamber. Perhaps his destiny will take him to the hereditary Chamber, for we know that he has talent and means enough to fulfil that expectation. Do you not agree with me, madame?” he added, turning to the widow.

“You anticipate my dearest hope,” she replied. “Monsieur de Manerville must be a peer of France, or I shall die of mortification.”

“Therefore all that leads to that end — ” continued Mathias with a cordial gesture to the astute mother-in-law.

"— will promote my eager desire," she replied.

"Well, then," said Mathias, "is not this marriage the proper occasion on which to entail the estate and create the family? Such a course would, undoubtedly, militate in the mind of the present government in favor of the nomination of my client whenever a batch of appointments is sent in. Monsieur le comte can very well afford to devote the estate of Lanstrac (which is worth a million) to this purpose. I do not ask that mademoiselle should contribute an equal sum; that would not be just. But we can surely apply eight hundred thousand of her patrimony to this object. There are two domains adjoining Lanstrac now to be sold, which can be purchased for that sum, which will return in rentals four and a half per cent. The house in Paris should be included in the entail. The surplus of the two fortunes, if judiciously managed, will amply suffice for the fortunes of the younger children. If the contracting parties will agree to this arrangement, Monsieur ought certainly to accept your guardianship account with its deficiency. I consent to that."

"*Questa coda non è di questo gatto* (That tail does n't belong to that cat)," murmured Madame Évangélista, appealing to Solonet.

"There 's a snake in the grass somewhere," answered Solonet, in a low voice, replying to the Italian proverb with a French one.

"Why do you make this fuss?" asked Paul, leading Mathias into the adjoining *salon*.

"To save you from being ruined," replied the old notary, in a whisper. "You are determined to marry

a girl and her mother who have already squandered two millions in seven years; you are pledging yourself to a debt of eleven hundred thousand francs to your children, to whom you will have to account for the fortune you are acknowledging to have received with their mother. You risk having your own fortune squandered in five years, and to be left as naked as Saint-John himself, besides being a debtor to your wife and children for enormous sums. If you are determined to put your life in that boat, Monsieur le comte, of course you can do as you choose; but at least let me, your old friend, try to save the house of Manerville."

"How is this scheme going to save it?" asked Paul.

"Monsieur le comte, you are in love —"

"Yes."

"A lover is about as discreet as a cannon-ball; therefore, I shall not explain. If you repeated what I should say, your marriage would probably be broken off. I protect your love by my silence. Have you confidence in my devotion?"

"A fine question!"

"Well, then, believe me when I tell you that Madame Évangélista, her notary, and her daughter, are tricking us through thick and thin; they are more than clever. *Tudieu!* what a sly game!"

"Not Natalie?" cried Paul.

"I sha'n't put my fingers between the bark and the tree," said the old man. "You want her, take her! But I wish you were well out of this marriage, if it could be done without the least wrong-doing on your part."

“Why do you wish it?”

“Because that girl will spend the mines of Peru. Besides, see how she rides a horse, — like the groom of a circus; she is half emancipated already. Such girls make bad wives.”

Paul pressed the old man’s hand, saying, with a confident air of self-conceit: —

“Don’t be uneasy as to that! But now, at this moment, what am I to do?”

“Hold firm to my conditions. They will consent, for no one’s apparent interest is injured. Madame Évangélista is very anxious to marry her daughter; I see that in her little game — Beware of her!”

Paul returned to the *salon*, where he found his future mother-in-law conversing in a low tone with Solonet, just as he himself had been conversing with Mathias. Natalie, kept outside of these mysterious conferences, was playing with a screen. Embarrassed by her position, she was thinking to herself: “How odd it is that they tell me nothing of my own affairs.”

The younger notary had seized, in the main, the future effect of the new proposal, based, as it was, on the self-love of both parties, into which his client had fallen headlong. Now, while Mathias was more than a mere notary, Solonet was still a young man, and brought into his business the vanity of youth. It often happens that personal conceit makes a man forgetful of the interests of his client. In this case, Maître Solonet, who would not suffer the widow to think that Nestor had vanquished Achilles, advised her to conclude the marriage on the terms proposed. Little he cared for the future working of

the marriage contract; to him, the conditions of victory were: Madame Évangélista released from her obligations as guardian, her future secured, and Natalie married.

“Bordeaux shall know that you have ceded eleven hundred thousand francs to your daughter, and that you still have twenty-five thousand francs a year left,” whispered Solonet to his client. “For my part, I did not expect to obtain such a fine result.”

“But,” she said, “explain to me why the creation of this entail should have calmed the storm at once.”

“It relieves their distrust of you and of your daughter. An entail is unchangeable; neither husband nor wife can touch that capital.”

“Then this arrangement is positively insulting!”

“No; we call it simply precaution. The old fellow has caught you in a net. If you refuse to consent to the entail, he can reply: ‘Then your object is to squander the fortune of my client, who, by the creation of this entail, is protected from all such injury as securely as if the marriage took place under the *régime dotal*.’”

Solonet quieted his own scruples by reflecting: “After all, these stipulations will take effect only in the future, by which time Madame Évangélista will be dead and buried.”

Madame Évangélista contented herself, for the present, with these explanations, having full confidence in Solonet. She was wholly ignorant of law; considering her daughter as good as married, she thought she had gained her end, and was filled with the joy of success. Thus, as Mathias had shrewdly calculated,

neither Solonet nor Madame Évangélista understood as yet, to its full extent, this scheme which he had based on reasons that were undeniable.

"Well, Monsieur Mathias," said the widow, "all is for the best, is it not?"

"Madame, if you and Monsieur le comte consent to this arrangement you ought to exchange pledges. It is fully understood, I suppose," he continued, looking from one to the other, "that the marriage will only take place on condition of creating an entail upon the estate of Lanstrac and the house in the rue de la Pepinière, together with eight hundred thousand francs in money brought by the future wife, the said sum to be invested in landed property? Pardon me the repetition, madame; but a positive and solemn engagement becomes absolutely necessary. The creation of an entail requires formalities, application to the chancellor, a royal ordinance, and we ought at once to conclude the purchase of the new estate in order that the property be included in the royal ordinance by virtue of which it becomes inalienable. In many families this would be reduced to writing, but on this occasion I think a simple consent will suffice. Do you consent?"

"Yes," replied Madame Évangélista.

"Yes," said Paul.

"And I?" asked Natalie, laughing.

"You are a minor, mademoiselle," replied Solonet; "don't complain of that."

It was then agreed that Maître Mathias should draw up the contract, Maître Solonet the guardianship account and release, and that both documents should

be signed, as the law requires some days before the celebration of the marriage. After a few polite salutations the notaries withdrew.

"It rains, Mathias; shall I take you home?" said Solonet. "My cabriolet is here."

"My carriage is here, too," said Paul, manifesting an intention to accompany the old man.

"I won't rob you of a moment's pleasure," said Mathias. "I accept my friend Solonet's offer."

"Well," said Achilles to Nestor, as the cabriolet rolled away, "you have been truly patriarchal to-night. The fact is, those young people would certainly have ruined themselves."

"I felt anxious about their future," replied Mathias, keeping silence as to the real motives of his proposition.

At this moment the two notaries were like a pair of actors arm in arm behind the stage on which they have played a scene of hatred and provocation.

"But," said Solonet, thinking of his rights as notary, "isn't it my place to buy that land you mentioned? The money is part of our dowry."

"How can you put property bought in the name of Mademoiselle Évangélista into the creation of an entail by the Comte de Manerville?" replied Mathias.

"We shall have to ask the chancellor about that," said Solonet.

"But I am the notary of the seller as well as of the buyer of that land," said Mathias. "Besides, Monsieur de Manerville can buy in his own name. At the time of payment we can make mention of the fact that the dowry funds are put into it."

"You've an answer for everything, old man," said Solonet, laughing. "You were really surpassing to-night; you beat us squarely."

"For an old fellow who did n't expect your batteries of grape-shot, I did pretty well, did n't I?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Solonet.

The odious struggle in which the material welfare of a family had been so perilously near destruction was to the two notaries nothing more than a matter of professional polemics.

"I have n't been forty years in harness for nothing," remarked Mathias. "Look here, Solonet," he added, "I'm a good fellow; you shall help in drawing the deeds for the sale of those lands."

"Thanks, my dear Mathias. I'll serve you in return on the very first occasion."

While the two notaries were peacefully returning homeward, with no other sensations than a little throaty warmth, Paul and Madame Évangélista were left a prey to the nervous trepidation, the quivering of the flesh and brain which excitable natures pass through after a scene in which their interests and their feelings have been violently shaken. In Madame Évangélista these last mutterings of the storm were overshadowed by a terrible reflection, a lurid gleam which she wanted, at any cost, to dispel.

"Has Maître Mathias destroyed in a few minutes the work I have been doing for six months?" she asked herself. "Was he withdrawing Paul from my influence by filling his mind with suspicion during their secret conference in the next room?"

She was standing absorbed in these thoughts before

the fireplace, her elbow resting on the marble mantelshelf. When the *porte-cochère* closed behind the carriage of the two notaries, she turned to her future son-in-law, impatient to solve her doubts.

"This has been the most terrible day of my life," cried Paul, overjoyed to see all difficulties vanish. "I know no one so downright in speech as that old Mathias. May God hear him, and make me peer of France! Dear Natalie, I desire this for your sake more than for my own. You are my ambition; I live only in you."

Hearing this speech uttered in the accents of the heart, and noting, more especially, the limpid azure of Paul's eyes, whose glance betrayed no thought of double meaning, Madame Évangélista's satisfaction was complete. She regretted the sharp language with which she had spurred him, and in the joy of success she resolved to reassure him as to the future. Calming her countenance, and giving to her eyes that expression of tender friendship which made her so attractive, she smiled and answered:—

"I can say as much to you. Perhaps, dear Paul, my Spanish nature led me farther than my heart desired. Be what you are, — kind as God himself, — and do not be angry with me for a few hasty words. Shake hands."

Paul was abashed; he fancied himself to blame, and he kissed Madame Évangélista.

"Dear Paul," she said with much emotion, "why could not those two sharks have settled this matter without dragging us into it, since it was so easy to settle?"

"In that case I should not have known how grand and generous you can be," replied Paul.

"Indeed she is, Paul!" cried Natalie, pressing his hand.

"We have still a few little matters to settle, my dear son," said Madame Évangélista. "My daughter and I are above the foolish vanities to which so many persons cling. Natalie does not need my diamonds, but I am glad to give them to her."

"Ah! my dear mother, do you suppose that I will accept them?"

"Yes, my child; they are one of the conditions of the contract."

"I will not allow it; I will not marry at all," cried Natalie, vehemently. "Keep those jewels which my father took such pride in collecting for you. How could Monsieur Paul exact —"

"Hush, my dear," said her mother, whose eyes now filled with tears. "My ignorance of business compels me to a greater sacrifice than that."

"What sacrifice?"

"I must sell my house in order to pay the money that I owe to you."

"What money can you possibly owe to me?" she said; "to me, who owe you life! If my marriage costs you the slightest sacrifice, I will not marry."

"Child!"

"Dear Natalie, try to understand that neither I, nor your mother, nor you yourself, require these sacrifices, but our children."

"Suppose I do not marry at all?"

"Do you not love me?" said Paul, tenderly.

"Come, come, my silly child; do you imagine that a contract is like a house of cards which you can blow down at will? Dear little ignoramus, you don't know what trouble we have had to found an entail for the benefit of your eldest son. Don't cast us back into the discussions from which we have just escaped."

"Why do you wish to ruin my mother?" said Natalie, looking at Paul.

"Why are you so rich?" he replied, smiling.

"Don't quarrel, my children, you are not yet married," said Madame Évangélista. "Paul," she continued, "you are not to give either corbeille, or jewels, or trousseau. Natalie has everything in profusion. Lay by the money you would otherwise put into wedding presents. I know nothing more stupidly bourgeois and commonplace than to spend a hundred thousand francs on a corbeille, when five thousand a year given to a young woman saves her much anxiety and lasts her lifetime. Besides, the money for a corbeille is needed to decorate your house in Paris. We will return to Lanstrac in the spring; for Solonet is to settle my debts during the winter."

"All is for the best," cried Paul, at the summit of happiness."

"So I shall see Paris!" cried Natalie, in a tone that would justly have alarmed de Marsay.

"If we decide upon this plan," said Paul, "I'll write to de Marsay and get him to take a box for me at the Bouffons and also at the Italian opera."

"You are very kind; I should never have dared to ask for it," said Natalie. "Marriage is a very agree-

able institution if it gives husbands a talent for divining the wishes of their wives."

"It is nothing else," replied Paul. "But see how late it is; I ought to go."

"Why leave so soon to-night?" said Madame Évangélista, employing those coaxing ways to which men are so sensitive.

Though all this passed on the best of terms, and according to the laws of the most exquisite politeness, the effect of the discussion of these contending interests had, nevertheless, cast between son and mother-in-law a seed of distrust and enmity which was liable to sprout under the first heat of anger, or the warmth of a feeling too harshly bruised. In most families the settlement of *dots* and the deeds of gift required by a marriage contract give rise to primitive emotions of hostility, caused by self-love, by the lesion of certain sentiments, by regret for the sacrifices made, and by the desire to diminish them. When difficulties arise there is always a victorious side and a vanquished one. The parents of the future pair try to conclude the matter, which is purely commercial in their eyes, to their own advantage; and this leads to the trickery, shrewdness, and deception of such negotiations. Generally the husband alone is initiated into the secret of these discussions, and the wife is kept, like Natalie, in ignorance of the stipulations which make her rich or poor.

As he left the house, Paul reflected that, thanks to the cleverness of his notary, his fortune was almost entirely secured from injury. If Madame Évangélista did not live apart from her daughter their united

household would have an income of more than a hundred thousand francs to spend. All his expectations of a happy and comfortable life would be realized.

"My mother-in-law seems to me an excellent woman," he thought, still under the influence of the cajoling manner by which she had endeavored to disperse the clouds raised by the discussion. "Mathias is mistaken. These notaries are strange fellows; they envenom everything. The harm started from that little cock-sparrow Solonet, who wanted to play a clever game."

While Paul went to bed recapitulating the advantages he had won during the evening, Madame Évangélista was congratulating herself equally on her victory.

"Well, darling mother, are you satisfied?" said Natalie, following Madame Évangélista into her bedroom.

"Yes, love," replied the mother, "everything went well, according to my wishes; I feel a weight lifted from my shoulders which was crushing me. Paul is a most easy-going man. Dear fellow! yes, certainly, we must make his life prosperous. You will make him happy, and I will be responsible for his political success. The Spanish ambassador used to be a friend of mine, and I'll renew the relation — as I will with the rest of my old acquaintance. Oh! you'll see! we shall soon be in the very heart of Parisian life; all will be enjoyment for us. You shall have the pleasures, my dearest, and I the last occupation of existence, — the game of ambition! Don't be alarmed when you see me selling this house. Do you suppose we shall ever

come back to live in Bordeaux? no. Lanstrac? yes. But we shall spend all our winters in Paris, where our real interests will be. Well, Natalie, tell me, was it very difficult to do what I asked of you?"

"My little mamma! every now and then I felt ashamed."

"Solonet advises me to put the proceeds of this house into an annuity," said Madame Évangélista, "but I shall do otherwise; I won't take a penny of my fortune from you."

"I saw you were all very angry," said Natalie. "How did the tempest calm down?"

"By an offer of my diamonds," replied Madame Évangélista. "Solonet was right. How ably he conducted the whole affair. Get out my jewel-case, Natalie. I have never seriously considered what my diamonds are worth. When I said a hundred thousand francs I talked nonsense. Madame de Gyas always declared that the necklace and ear-rings your father gave me on our marriage day were worth at least that sum. My poor husband was so lavish! Then my family diamond, the one Philip the Second gave to the Duke of Alba, and which my aunt bequeathed to me, the *Discreto*, was, I think, appraised in former times at four thousand quadruples,—one of our Spanish gold coins.

Natalie laid out upon her mother's toilet-table the pearl necklace, the sets of jewels, the gold bracelets and precious stones of all description, with that inexpressible sensation enjoyed by certain women at the sight of such treasures, by which — so commentators on the Talmud say — the fallen angels seduce the

daughters of men, having sought these flowers of celestial fire in the bowels of the earth.

"Certainly," said Madame Évangélista, "though I know nothing about jewels except how to accept and wear them, I think there must be a great deal of money in these. Then, if we make but one household, I can sell my plate, the weight of which, as mere silver, would bring thirty thousand francs. I remember when we brought it from Lima, the custom-house officers weighed and appraised it. Solonet is right. I'll send to-morrow to Élie Magus. The Jew shall estimate the value of these things. Perhaps I can avoid sinking any of my fortune in an annuity."

"What a beautiful pearl necklace!" said Natalie.

"He ought to give it to you, if he loves you," replied her mother; "and I think he might have all my other jewels reset and let you keep them. The diamonds are a part of your property in the contract. And now, good-night, my darling. After the fatigues of this day we both need rest."

The woman of luxury, the creole, the great lady, incapable of analyzing the results of a contract which was not yet in force, went to sleep in the joy of seeing her daughter married to a man who was easy to manage, who would let them both be mistresses of his home, and whose fortune, united to theirs, would require no change in their way of living. Thus having settled her account with her daughter, whose patrimony was acknowledged in the contract, Madame Évangélista could feel at her ease.

"How foolish of me to worry as I did," she thought. "But I wish the marriage were well over."

So Madame Évangélista, Paul, Natalie, and the two notaries were equally satisfied with the first day's result. The *Te Deum* was sung in both camps, — a dangerous situation; for there comes a moment when the vanquished side is aware of its mistake. To Madame Évangélista's mind, her son-in-law was the vanquished side.

IV.

THE MARRIAGE-CONTRACT SECOND DAY.

THE next day Élie Magus (who happened at that time to be in Bordeaux) obeyed Madame Évangélista's summons, believing, from general rumor as to the marriage of Comte Paul with Mademoiselle Natalie, that it concerned a purchase of jewels for the bride. The Jew was, therefore, astonished when he learned that, on the contrary, he was sent for to estimate the value of the mother-in-law's property. The instinct of his race, as well as certain insidious questions, made him aware that the value of the diamonds was included in the marriage-contract. The stones were not to be sold, and yet he was to estimate them as if some private person were buying them from a dealer. Jewellers alone know how to distinguish between the diamonds of Asia and those of Brazil. The stones of Golconda and Visapur are known by a whiteness and glittering brilliancy which others have not, — the water of the Brazilian diamonds having a yellow tinge which reduces their selling value. Madame Évangélista's necklace and ear-rings, being composed entirely of Asiatic diamonds, were valued by Elie Magus at two hundred and fifty thousand francs. As for the *Discreto*, he pronounced it one of the finest diamonds

in the possession of private persons; it was known to the trade and valued at one hundred thousand francs. On hearing this estimate, which proved to her the lavishness of her husband, Madame Évangélista asked the old Jew whether she should be able to obtain that money immediately.

"Madame," replied the Jew, "if you wish to sell I can give you only seventy-five thousand for the brilliant, and one hundred and sixty thousand for the necklace and earrings."

"Why such reduction?"

"Madame," replied Magus, "the finer the diamond, the longer we keep it unsold. The rarity of such investments is one reason for the high value set upon precious stones. As the merchant cannot lose the interest of his money, this additional sum, joined to the rise and fall to which such merchandise is subject, explains the difference between the price of purchase and the price of sale. By owning these diamonds you have lost the interest on three hundred thousand francs for twenty years. If you wear your jewels ten times a year, it costs you three thousand francs each evening to put them on. How many beautiful gowns you could buy with that sum. Those who own diamonds are, therefore, very foolish; but, luckily for us, women are never willing to understand the calculation."

"I thank you for explaining it to me, and I shall profit by it."

"Do you wish to sell?" asked Magus, eagerly.

"What are the other jewels worth?"

The Jew examined the gold of the settings, held the

“ ‘ *Do you wish to sell?* ’ asked Magus, eagerly.”



pearls to the light, scrutinized the rubies, the diadems, clasps, bracelets, and chains, and said, in a mumbling tone: —

“A good many Portuguese diamonds from Brazil are among them. They are not worth more than a hundred thousand to me. But,” he added, “a dealer would sell them to a customer for one hundred and fifty thousand, at least.”

“I shall keep them,” said Madame Évangélista.

“You are wrong,” replied Elie Magus. “With the income from the sum they represent you could buy just as fine diamonds in five years, and have the capital to boot.”

This singular conference became known, and corroborated certain rumors excited by the discussion of the contract. The servants of the house, overhearing high voices, supposed the difficulties greater than they really were. Their gossip with other valets spread the information, which from the lower regions rose to the ears of the masters. The attention of society, and of the town in general, became so fixed on the marriage of two persons equally rich and well-born, that every one, great and small, busied themselves about the matter, and in less than a week the strangest rumors were bruited about. .

“Madame Évangélista sells her house; she must be ruined. She offered her diamonds to Élie Magus. Nothing is really settled between herself and the Comte de Manerville. Is it probable that the marriage will ever take place?”

To this question some answered yes, and others said no. The two notaries, when questioned, denied

these calumnies, and declared that the difficulties arose only from the official delay in constituting the entail. But when public opinion has taken a trend in one direction it is very difficult to turn it back. Though Paul went every day to Madame Évangélista's house, and though the notaries denied these assertions continually, the whispered calumny went on. Young girls, and their mothers and aunts, vexed at a marriage they had dreamed of for themselves or for their families, could not forgive the Spanish ladies for their happiness, as authors cannot forgive each other for their success. A few persons revenged themselves for the twenty-years luxury and grandeur of the family of Évangélista, which had lain heavily on their self-love. A leading personage at the prefecture declared that the notaries could have chosen no other language and followed no other conduct in the case of a rupture. The time actually required for the establishment of the entail confirmed the suspicions of the Bordeaux provincials.

"They will keep the ball going through the winter; then, in the spring, they will go to some watering-place, and we shall learn before the year is out that the marriage is off."

"And, of course, we shall be given to understand," said others, "for the sake of the honor of the two families, that the difficulties did not come from either side, but the chancellor refused to consent; you may be sure it will be some quibble about that entail which will cause the rupture."

"Madame Évangélista," some said, "lived in a style that the mines of Valenciana could n't meet.

When the time came to melt the bell, and pay the daughter's patrimony, nothing would be found to pay it with."

The occasion was excellent to add up the spendings of the handsome widow and prove, categorically, her ruin. Rumors were so rife that bets were made for and against the marriage. By the laws of worldly jurisprudence this gossip was not allowed to reach the ears of the parties concerned. No one was enemy or friend enough to Paul or to Madame Évangélista to inform either of what was being said. Paul had some business at Lanstrac, and used the occasion to make a hunting-party for several of the young men of Bordeaux,—a sort of farewell, as it were, to his bachelor life. This hunting party was accepted by society as a signal confirmation of public suspicion.

When this event occurred, Madame de Gyas, who had a daughter to marry, thought it high time to sound the matter, and to condole, with joyful heart, the blow received by the Évangélistas. Natalie and her mother were somewhat surprised to see the lengthened face of the marquise, and they asked at once if anything distressing had happened to her.

"Can it be," she replied, "that you are ignorant of the rumors that are circulating? Though I think them false myself, I have come to learn the truth in order to stop this gossip, at any rate among the circle of my own friends. To be the dupes or the accomplices of such an error is too false a position for true friends to occupy."

"But what is it? what has happened?" asked mother and daughter.

Madame de Gyas thereupon allowed herself the happiness of repeating all the current gossip, not sparing her two friends a single stab. Natalie and Madame Evangélista looked at each other and laughed, but they fully understood the meaning of the tale and the motives of their friend. The Spanish lady took her revenge very much as Célimène took hers on Arsinoë.

“My dear, are you ignorant — you who know the provinces so well — can you be ignorant of what a mother is capable when she has on her hands a daughter whom she cannot marry for want of *dot* and lovers, want of beauty, want of mind, and, sometimes, want of everything? Why, a mother in that position would rob a diligence or commit a murder, or wait for a man at the corner of a street — she would sacrifice herself twenty times over, if she was a mother at all. Now, as you and I both know, there are many such in that situation in Bordeaux, and no doubt they attribute to us their own thoughts and actions. Naturalists have depicted the habits and customs of many ferocious animals, but they have forgotten the mother and daughter in quest of a husband. Such women are hyenas, going about, as the Psalmist says, seeking whom they may devour, and adding to the instinct of the brute the intellect of man, and the genius of woman. I can understand that those little spiders, Mademoiselle de Belor, Mademoiselle de Trans, and others, after working so long at their webs without catching a fly, without so much as hearing a buzz, should be furious; I can even forgive their spiteful speeches. But that you, who can marry your daughter when you please, you, who are rich and titled, you

who have nothing of the provincial about you, whose daughter is clever and possesses fine qualities, with beauty and the power to choose — that you, so distinguished from the rest by your Parisian grace, should have paid the least heed to this talk does really surprise me. Am I bound to account to the public for the marriage stipulations which our notaries think necessary under the political circumstances of my son-in-law's future life? Has the mania for public discussion made its way into families? Ought I to convoke in writing the fathers and mothers of the province to come here and give their vote on the clauses of our marriage contract?"

A torrent of epigram flowed over Bordeaux. Madame Évangélista was about to leave the city, and could safely scan her friends and enemies, caricature them and lash them as she pleased, with nothing to fear in return. Accordingly, she now gave vent to her secret observations and her latent dislikes as she sought for the reason why this or that person denied the shining of the sun at mid-day.

"But, my dear," said the Marquise de Gyas, "this stay of the count at Lanstrac, these parties given to young men under such circumstances —"

"Ah! my dear," said the great lady, interrupting the marquise, "do you suppose that we adopt the pettiness of bourgeois customs? Is Count Paul held in bonds like a man who might seek to get away? Think you we ought to watch him with a squad of gendarmes lest some provincial conspiracy should get him away from us?"

"Be assured, my dearest friend, that it gives me the greatest pleasure to —"

Here her words were interrupted by a footman who entered the room to announce Paul. Like many lovers, Paul thought it charming to ride twelve miles to spend an hour with Natalie. He had left his friends while hunting, and came in booted and spurred, and whip in hand.

"Dear Paul," said Natalie, "you don't know what an answer you are giving to madame."

When Paul heard of the gossip that was current in Bordeaux, he laughed instead of being angry.

"These worthy people have found out, perhaps, that there will be no wedding festivities, according to provincial usages, no marriage at mid-day in the church, and they are furious. Well, my dear mother," he added, kissing her nand, "let us pacify them with a ball on the day when we sign the contract, just as the government flings a fête to the people in the great square of the Champs-Élysées, and we will give our dear friends the dolorous pleasure of signing a marriage-contract such as they have seldom heard of in the provinces."

This little incident proved of great importance. Madame Évangélista invited all Bordeaux to witness the signature of the contract, and showed her intention of displaying in this last fête a luxury which should refute the foolish lies of the community.

The preparations for this event required over a month, and it was called the fête of the camellias. Immense quantities of that beautiful flower were massed on the staircase, and in the antechamber and supper-room. During this month the formalities for constituting the entail were concluded in Paris; the

estates adjoining Lanstrac were purchased, the banns were published, and all doubts finally dissipated. Friends and enemies thought only of preparing their toilets for the coming fête.

The time occupied by these events obscured the difficulties raised by the first discussion, and swept into oblivion the words and arguments of that stormy conference. Neither Paul nor his mother-in-law continued to think of them. Were they not, after all, as Madame Évangélista had said, the affair of the two notaries?

But — to whom has it never happened, when life is in its fullest flow, to be suddenly challenged by the voice of memory, raised, perhaps, too late, reminding us of some important fact, some threatened danger? On the morning of the day when the contract was to be signed and the fête given, one of these flashes of the soul illuminated the mind of Madame Évangélista during the semi-somnolence of her waking hour. The words that she herself had uttered at the moment when Mathias acceded to Solonet's condition, *Questa coda non è di questo gatto*, were cried aloud in her mind by that voice of memory. In spite of her incapacity for business, Madame Évangélista's shrewdness told her: —

"If so clever a notary as Mathias was pacified, it must have been that he saw compensation at the cost of some one."

That some one could not be Paul, as she had blindly hoped. Could it be that her daughter's fortune was to pay the costs of war? She resolved to demand explanations on the tenor of the contract, not reflect-

ing on the course she would have to take in case she found her interests seriously compromised. This day had so powerful an influence on Paul de Manerville's conjugal life that it is necessary to explain certain of the external circumstances which accompanied it.

Madame Évangélista had shrunk from no expense for this dazzling fête. The court-yard was gravelled and converted into a tent, and filled with shrubs, although it was winter. The camellias, of which so much had been said from Angoulême to Dax, were banked on the staircase and in the vestibules. Wall partitions had disappeared to enlarge the supper-room and the ball-room where the dancing was to be. Bordeaux, a city famous for the luxury of colonial fortunes, was on a tiptoe of expectation for this scene of fairyland. About eight o'clock, as the last discussion of the contract was taking place within the house, the inquisitive populace, anxious to see the ladies in full dress getting out of their carriages, formed in two hedges on either side of the *porte-cochère*. Thus the sumptuous atmosphere of a fête acted upon all minds at the moment when the contract was being signed, illuminating colored lamps lighted up the shrubs, and the wheels of the arriving guests echoed from the court-yard. The two notaries had dined with the bridal pair and their mother. Mathias's head-clerk, whose business it was to receive the signatures of the guests during the evening (taking due care that the contract was not surreptitiously read by the signers), was also present at the dinner.

No bridal toilet was ever comparable with that of Natalie, whose beauty, decked with laces and satin,

her hair coquettishly falling in a myriad of curls about her throat, resembled that of a flower encased in its foliage. Madame Évangélista, robed in a gown of cherry velvet, a color judiciously chosen to heighten the brilliancy of her skin and her black hair and eyes, glowed with the beauty of a woman at forty, and wore her pearl necklace, clasped with the *Discreto*, a visible contradiction to the late calumnies.

To fully explain this scene, it is necessary to say that Paul and Natalie sat together on a sofa beside the fireplace and paid no attention to the reading of the documents. Equally childish and equally happy, regarding life as a cloudless sky, rich, young, and loving, they chattered to each other in a low voice, sinking into whispers. Arming his love with the presence of legality, Paul took delight in kissing the tips of Natalie's fingers, in lightly touching her snowy shoulders and the waving curls of her hair, hiding from the eyes of others these joys of illegal emancipation. Natalie played with a screen of peacock's feathers given to her by Paul, — a gift which is to love, according to superstitious belief in certain countries, as dangerous an omen as the gift of scissors or other cutting instruments, which recall, no doubt, the *Parces* of antiquity.

Seated beside the two notaries, Madame Évangélista gave her closest attention to the reading of the documents. After listening to the guardianship account, most ably written out by Solonet, in which Natalie's share of the three million and more francs left by Monsieur Évangélista was shown to be the much-debated eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand,

Madame Évangélista said to the heedless young couple: —

“Come, listen, listen, my children; this is your marriage contract.”

The clerk drank a glass of iced-water, Solonet and Mathias blew their noses, Paul and Natalie looked at the four personages before them, listened to the preamble, and returned to their chatter. The statement of the property brought by each party; the general deed of gift in the event of death without issue; the deed of gift of one-fourth in life-interest and one-fourth in capital without interest, allowed by the Code, whatever be the number of the children; the constitution of a common fund for husband and wife; the settlement of the diamonds on the wife, the library and horses on the husband, were duly read and passed without observations. Then followed the constitution of the entail. When all was read and nothing remained but to sign the contract, Madame Évangélista demanded to know what would be the ultimate effect of the entail.

“An entail, madame,” replied Solonet, “means an inalienable right to the inheritance of certain property belonging to both husband and wife, which is settled from generation to generation on the eldest son of the house, without, however, depriving him of his right to share in the division of the rest of the property.”

“What will be the effect of this on my daughter’s rights?”

Maitre Mathias, incapable of disguising the truth, replied: —

“Madame, an entail being an appanage, or portion

of property set aside for this purpose from the fortunes of husband and wife, it follows that if the wife dies first, leaving several children, one of them a son, Monsieur de Manerville will owe those children three hundred and sixty thousand francs only, from which he will deduct his fourth in life-interest and his fourth in capital. Thus his debt to those children will be reduced to one hundred and sixty thousand francs, or thereabouts, exclusive of his savings and profits from the common fund constituted for husband and wife. If, on the contrary, he dies first, leaving a male heir, Madame de Manerville has a right to three hundred and sixty thousand francs only, and to her deeds of gift of such of her husband's property as is not included in the entail, to the diamonds now settled upon her, and to her profits and savings from the common fund."

The effect of Maître Mathias's astute and far-sighted policy were now plainly seen.

"My daughter is ruined," said Madame Évangélista in a low voice.

The old and the young notary both overheard the words.

"Is it ruin," replied Mathias, speaking gently, "to constitute for her family an indestructible fortune?"

The younger notary, seeing the expression of his client's face, thought it judicious in him to state the disaster in plain terms.

"We tried to trick them out of three hundred thousand francs," he whispered to the angry woman. "They have actually laid hold of eight hundred thousand; it is a loss of four hundred thousand from our interests

for the benefit of the children. You must now either break the marriage off at once, or carry it through," concluded Solonet.

It is impossible to describe the moment of silence that followed. Maître Mathias waited in triumph the signature of the two persons who had expected to rob his client. Natalie, not competent to understand that she had lost half her fortune, and Paul, ignorant that the house of Manerville had gained it, were laughing and chattering still. Solonet and Madame Évangélista gazed at each other; the one endeavoring to conceal his indifference, the other repressing the rush of a crowd of bitter feelings.

After suffering in her own mind the struggles of remorse, after blaming Paul as the cause of her dishonesty, Madame Évangélista had decided to employ those shameful manœuvres to cast on him the burden of her own unfaithful guardianship, considering him her victim. But now, in a moment, she perceived that where she thought she triumphed she was about to perish, and her victim was her own daughter. Guilty without profit, she saw herself the dupe of an honorable old man, whose respect she had doubtless lost. Her secret conduct must have inspired the stipulation of old Mathias; and Mathias must have enlightened Paul. Horrible reflection! Even if he had not yet done so, as soon as that contract was signed the old wolf would surely warn his client of the dangers he had run and had now escaped, were it only to receive the praise of his sagacity. He would put him on his guard against the wily woman who had lowered herself to this conspiracy; he would destroy

the empire she had conquered over her son-in-law! Feeble natures, once warned, turn obstinate, and are never won again. At the first discussion of the contract she had reckoned on Paul's weakness, and on the impossibility he would feel of breaking off a marriage so far advanced. But now, she herself was far more tightly bound. Three months earlier Paul had no real obstacles to prevent the rupture; now, all Bordeaux knew that the notaries had smoothed the difficulties; the banns were published; the wedding was to take place immediately; the friends of both families were at that moment arriving for the fête, and to witness the contract. How could she postpone the marriage at this late hour? The cause of the rupture would surely be made known; Maître Mathias's stern honor was too well known in Bordeaux; his word would be believed in preference to hers. The scoffers would turn against her and against her daughter. No, she could not break it off; she must yield!

These reflections, so cruelly sound, fell upon Madame Évangélista's brain like a water-spout and split it. Though she still maintained the dignity and reserve of a diplomatist, her chin was shaken by that apoplectic movement which showed the anger of Catherine the Second on the famous day when, seated on her throne and in presence of her court (very much in the present circumstances of Madame Évangélista), she was braved by the King of Sweden. Solonet observed that play of the muscles, which revealed the birth of a mortal hatred, a lurid storm to which there was no lightning. At this moment Madame Évangélista vowed to her son-in-law one of those unquenchable

hatreds the seeds of which were left by the Moors in the atmosphere of Spain.

"Monsieur," she said, bending to the ear of her notary, "you called that stipulation balderdash; it seems to me that nothing could have been more clear."

"Madame, allow me — "

"Monsieur," she continued, paying no heed to his interruption, "if you did not perceive the effect of that entail at the time of our first conference, it is very extraordinary that it did not occur to you in the silence of your study. This can hardly be incapacity."

The young notary drew his client into the next room, saying to himself, as he did so: —

"I get a three-thousand-franc fee for the guardianship account, three thousand for the contract, six thousand on the sale of the house, fifteen thousand in all — better not be angry."

He closed the door, cast on Madame Évangélista the cool look of a business man, and said: —

"Madame, having, for your sake, passed — as I did — the proper limits of legal craft, do you seriously intend to reward my devotion by such language?"

"But, monsieur — "

"Madame, I did not, it is true, calculate the effect of the deeds of gift. But if you do not wish Comte Paul for your son-in-law you are not obliged to accept him. The contract is not signed. Give your fête, and postpone the signing. It is far better to brave Bordeaux than sacrifice yourself."

"How can I justify such a course to society, which is already prejudiced against us by the slow conclusion of the marriage?"

"By some error committed in Paris; some missing document not sent with the rest," replied Solonet.

"But those purchases of land near Lanstrac?"

"Monsieur de Manerville will be at no loss to find another bride and another dowry."

"Yes, he'll lose nothing; but we lose all, all!"

"You?" replied Solonet; "why, you can easily find another count who will cost you less money, if a title is the chief object of this marriage."

"No, no! we can't stake our honor in that way. I am caught in a trap, monsieur. All Bordeaux will ring with this to-morrow. Our solemn words are pledged —"

"You wish the happiness of Mademoiselle Natalie."

"Above all things."

"To be happy in France," said the notary, "means being mistress of the home. She can lead that fool of a Manerville by the nose if she chooses; he is so dull he has actually seen nothing of all this. Even if he now distrusts you, he will always trust his wife; and his wife is *you*, is she not? The count's fate is still within your power if you choose to play the cards in your hand."

"If that were true, monsieur, I know not what I would not do to show my gratitude," she said, in a transport of feeling that colored her cheeks.

"Let us now return to the others, madame," said Solonet. "Listen carefully to what I shall say; and then — you shall think me incapable if you choose."

"My dear friend," said the young notary to Maître Mathias, "in spite of your great ability, you have not foreseen either the case of Monsieur de Manerville

dying without children, nor that in which he leaves only female issue. In either of those cases the entail would pass to the Manervilles, or, at any rate, give rise to suits on their part. I think, therefore, it is necessary to stipulate that in the first case the entailed property shall pass under the general deed of gift between husband and wife; and in the second case that the entail be declared void. This agreement concerns the wife's interest."

"Both clauses seem to me perfectly just," said Maître Mathias. "As to their ratification, Monsieur le comte can, doubtless, come to an understanding with the chancellor, if necessary."

Solonet took a pen and added this momentous clause on the margin of the contract. Paul and Natalie paid no attention to the matter; but Madame Évangélista dropped her eyes while Maître Mathias read the added sentence aloud.

"We will now sign," said the mother.

The volume of voice which Madame Évangélista repressed as she uttered those words betrayed her violent emotion. She was thinking to herself. "No, my daughter shall not be ruined — but he! My daughter shall have the name, the title, and the fortune. If she should some day discover that she does not love him, that she loves another, irresistibly, Paul shall be driven out of France! My daughter shall be free, and happy, and rich."

If Maître Mathias understood how to analyze business interests, he knew little of the analysis of human passions. He accepted Madame Évangélista's words as an honorable *amende*, instead of judging them for

what they were, a declaration of war. While Solonet and his clerk superintended Natalie as she signed the documents,—an operation which took time,—Mathias took Paul aside and told him the meaning of the stipulation by which he had saved him from ultimate ruin.

“The whole affair is now *en regle*. I hold the documents. But the contract contains a receipt for the diamonds; you must ask for them. Business is business. Diamonds are going up just now, but may go down. The purchase of those new domains justifies you in turning everything into money that you can. Therefore, Monsieur le comte, have no false modesty in this matter. The first payment is due after the formalities are over. The sum is two hundred thousand francs; put the diamonds into that. You have the lien on this house, which will be sold at once, and will pay the rest. If you have the courage to spend only fifty thousand francs for the next three years, you can save the two hundred thousand francs you are now obliged to pay. If you plant vineyards on your new estates, you can get an income of over twenty-five thousand francs upon them. You may be said, in short, to have made a good marriage.”

Paul pressed the hand of his old friend very affectionately, a gesture which did not escape Madame Évangélista, who now came forward to offer him the pen. Suspicion became certainty to her mind. She was confident that Paul and Mathias had come to an understanding about her. Rage and hatred sent the blood surging through her veins to her heart. The worst had come.

After verifying that all the documents were duly signed and the initials of the parties affixed to the bottom of the leaves, Maître Mathias looked from Paul to his mother-in-law, and seeing that his client did not intend to speak of the diamonds, he said:—

“I do not suppose there can be any doubt about the transfer of the diamonds, as you are now one family.”

“It would be more regular if Madame Évangélista made them over now, as Monsieur de Manerville has become responsible for the guardianship funds, and we never know who may live or die,” said Solonet, who thought he saw in this circumstance fresh cause of anger in the mother-in-law against the son-in-law.

“Ah! mother,” cried Paul, “it would be insulting to us all to do that, — *Summum jus, summa injuria*, monsieur,” he said to Solonet.

“And I,” said Madame Évangélista, led by the hatred now surging in her heart to see a direct insult to her in the indirect appeal of Maître Mathias, “I will tear that contract up if you do not take them.”

She left the room in one of those furious passions which long for the power to destroy everything, and which the sense of impotence drives almost to madness.

“For Heaven’s sake, take them, Paul,” whispered Natalie in his ear. “My mother is angry; I shall know why to-night, and I will tell you. We must pacify her.”

Calmed by this first outburst, madame kept the necklace and ear-rings which she was wearing, and brought the other jewels, valued at one hundred and fifty thousand francs by Élie Magus. Accustomed to

the sight of family diamonds in all valuations of inheritance, Maitre Mathias and Solonet examined these jewels in their cases and exclaimed upon their beauty.

"You will lose nothing, after all, upon the *dot*, Monsieur le comte," said Solonet, bringing the color to Paul's face.

"Yes," said Mathias, "these jewels will meet the first payment on the purchase of the new estate."

"And the costs of the contract," added Solonet.

Hatred feeds, like love, on little things; the least thing strengthens it; as one beloved can do no evil, so the person hated can do no good. Madame Évangélista assigned to hypocrisy the natural embarrassment of Paul, who was unwilling to take the jewels, and not knowing where to put the cases, longed to fling them from the window. Madame Évangélista spurred him with a glance which seemed to say, "Take your property from here."

"Dear Natalie," said Paul, "put away these jewels; they are yours; I give them to you."

Natalie locked them into the drawer of a console. At this instant the noise of the carriages in the courtyard and the murmur of voices in the reception-rooms became so loud that Natalie and her mother were forced to appear. The salons were filled in a few moments, and the fête began.

"Profit by the honeymoon to sell those diamonds," said the old notary to Paul as he went away.

While waiting for the dancing to begin, whispers went round about the marriage, and doubts were expressed as to the future of the promised couple.

"Is it finally arranged?" said one of the leading personages of the town to Madame Évangélista.

"We had so many documents to read and sign that I fear we are rather late," she replied; "but perhaps we are excusable."

"As for me, I heard nothing," said Natalie, giving her hand to her lover to open the ball.

"Both of those young persons are extravagant, and the mother is not of a kind to check them," said a dowager.

"But they have founded an entail, I am told, worth fifty thousand francs a year."

"Pooh!"

"In that I see the hand of our worthy Monsieur Mathias," said a magistrate. "If it is really true, he has done it to save the future of the family."

"Natalie is too handsome not to be horribly coquetish. After a couple of years of marriage," said one young woman, "I would n't answer for Monsieur de Manerville's happiness in his home."

"The Pink of Fashion will then need staking," said Solonet, laughing.

"Don't you think Madame Évangélista looks annoyed?" asked another.

"But, my dear, I have just been told that all she is able to keep is twenty-five thousand francs a year, and what is that to her?"

"Penury!"

"Yes, she has robbed herself for Natalie. Monsieur de Manerville has been so exacting —"

"Extremely exacting," put in Maître Solonet. "But before long he will be peer of France. The Maulin-

cours and the Vidame de Pamiers will use their influence. He belongs to the faubourg Saint-Germain."

"Oh! he is received there, and that is all," said a lady, who had tried to obtain him as a son-in-law. "Mademoiselle Évangélista, as the daughter of a merchant, will certainly not open the doors of the chapter-house of Cologne to him!"

"She is grand-niece to the Duke of Casa-Reale."

"Through the female line!"

The topic was presently exhausted. The card-players went to the tables, the young people danced, the supper was served, and the ball was not over till morning, when the first gleams of the coming day whitened the windows.

Having said adieu to Paul, who was the last to go away, Madame Évangélista went to her daughter's room; for her own had been taken by the architect to enlarge the scene of the fête. Though Natalie and her mother were overcome with sleep, they said a few words to each other as soon as they were alone.

"Tell me, mother dear, what was the matter with you?"

"My darling, I learned this evening to what lengths a mother's tenderness can go. You know nothing of business, and you are ignorant of the suspicions to which my integrity has been exposed. I have trampled my pride under foot, for your happiness and my reputation were at stake."

"Are you talking of the diamonds? Poor boy, he wept; he did not want them; I have them."

"Sleep now, my child. We will talk business when we wake — for," she added, sighing, "you and I have business now; another person has come between us."

"Ah! my dear mother, Paul will never be an obstacle to our happiness, yours and mine," murmured Natalie, as she went to sleep.

"Poor darling! she little knows that the man has ruined her."

Madame Évangélista's soul was seized at that moment with the first idea of avarice, a vice to which many become a prey as they grow aged. It came into her mind to recover in her daughter's interest the whole of the property left by her husband. She told herself that her honor demanded it. Her devotion to Natalie made her, in a moment, as shrewd and calculating as she had hitherto been careless and wasteful. She resolved to turn her capital to account, after investing a part of it in the Funds, which were then selling at eighty francs. A passion often changes the whole character in a moment; an indiscreet person becomes a diplomatist, a coward is suddenly brave. Hate made this prodigal woman a miser. Chance and luck might serve the project of vengeance, still undefined and confused, which she would now mature in her mind. She fell asleep, muttering to herself, "To-morrow!" By an unexplained phenomenon, the effects of which are familiar to all thinkers, her mind, during sleep, marshalled its ideas, enlightened them, classed them, prepared a means by which she was to rule Paul's life, and showed her a plan which she began to carry out on that very *to-morrow*.

V.

THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT—THIRD DAY.

THOUGH the excitement of the fête had driven from Paul's mind the anxious thoughts that now and then assailed it, when he was alone with himself and in his bed they returned to torment him.

"It seems to me," he said to himself, "that without that good Mathias my mother-in-law would have tricked me. And yet, is that believable? What interest could lead her to deceive me? Are we not to join fortunes and live together? Well, well, why should I worry about it? In two days Natalie will be my wife, our money relations are plainly defined, nothing can come between us. *Vogue la galère!*—Nevertheless, I'll be upon my guard. Suppose Mathias was right? Well, if he was, I'm not obliged to marry my mother-in-law."

In this second battle of the contract Paul's future had completely changed in aspect, though he was not aware of it. Of the two persons whom he was marrying, one, the cleverest, was now his mortal enemy, and meditated already withdrawing her interests from the common fund. Incapable of observing the difference that a creole nature placed between his mother-in-law and other women, Paul was far from suspecting her craftiness. The creole nature is apart from all others;

it derives from Europe by its intellect, from the tropics by the illogical violence of its passions, from the East by the apathetic indifference with which it does, or suffers, either good or evil, equally, — a graceful nature withal, but dangerous, as a child is dangerous if not watched. Like a child, the creole woman must have her way immediately; like a child, she would burn a house to boil an egg. In her soft and easy life she takes no care upon her mind; but when impassioned, she thinks of all things. She has something of the perfidy of the negroes by whom she has been surrounded from her cradle, but she is also as naive and even, at times, as artless as they. Like them and like the children, she wishes doggedly for one thing with a growing intensity of desire, and will brood upon that idea until she hatches it. A strange assemblage of virtues and defects! which her Spanish nature had strengthened in Madame Évangélista, and over which her French experience had cast the glaze of its politeness.

This character, slumbering in married happiness for sixteen years, occupied since then with the trivialities of social life, this nature to which a first hatred had revealed its strength, awoke now like a conflagration; at the moment of the woman's life when she was losing the dearest object of her affections and needed another element for the energy that possessed her, this flame burst forth. Natalie could be but three days more beneath her influence! Madame Évangélista, vanquished at other points, had one clear day before her, the last of those that a daughter spends beside her mother. A few words, and the creole nature could

influence the lives of the two beings about to walk together through the brambled paths and the dusty high-roads of Parisian society, for Natalie believed in her mother blindly. What far-reaching power would the counsel of that creole nature have on a mind so subservient! The whole future of these lives might be determined by one single speech. No code, no human institution can prevent the crime that kills by words. There lies the weakness of social law; in that is the difference between the morals of the great world and the morals of the people: one is frank, the other hypocritical; one employs the knife, the other the venom of ideas and language; to one death, to the other impunity.

The next morning, about mid-day, Madame Évangélista was half seated, half lying on the edge of her daughter's bed. During that waking hour they caressed and played together in happy memory of their loving life; a life in which no discord had ever troubled either the harmony of their feelings, the agreement of their ideas, or the mutual choice and enjoyment of their pleasures.

"Poor little darling!" said the mother, shedding true tears, "how can I help being sorrowful when I think that after I have fulfilled your every wish during your whole life you will belong, to-morrow night, to a man you must obey?"

"Oh, my dear mother, as for obeying! —" and Natalie made a little motion of her head which expressed a graceful rebellion. "You are joking," she continued. "My father always gratified your caprices; and why not? he loved you. And I am loved, too."

"Yes, Paul has a certain love for you. But if a married woman is not careful nothing more rapidly evaporates than conjugal love. The influence a wife ought to have over her husband depends entirely on how she begins with him. You need the best advice."

"But you will be with us."

"Possibly, dear child. Last night, while the ball was going on, I reflected on the dangers of our being together. If my presence were to do you harm, if the little acts by which you ought slowly, but surely, to establish your authority as a wife should be attributed to my influence, your home would become a hell. At the first frown I saw upon your husband's brow I, proud as I am, should instantly leave his house. If I were driven to leave it, better, I think, not to enter it. I should never forgive your husband if he caused trouble between us. Whereas, when you have once become the mistress, when your husband is to you what your father was to me, that danger is no longer to be feared. Though this wise policy will cost your young and tender heart a pang, your happiness demands that you become the absolute sovereign of your home."

"Then why, mamma, did you say just now I must obey him."

"My dear little daughter, in order that a wife may rule, she must always seem to do what her husband wishes. If you were not told this you might by some impulsive opposition destroy your future. Paul is a weak young man; he might allow a friend to rule him; he might even fall under the dominion of some woman who would make you feel her influence. Pre-

vent such disasters by making yourself from the very start his ruler. Is it not better that he be governed by you than by others?" .

"Yes, certainly," said Natalie. "I should think only of his happiness."

"And it is my privilege, darling, to think only of yours, and to wish not to leave you at so crucial a moment without a compass in the midst of the reefs through which you must steer."

"But, dearest mother, are we not strong enough, you and I, to stay together beside him, without having to fear those frowns you seem to dread. Paul loves you, mamma."

"Oh! oh! He fears me far more than he loves me. Observe him carefully to-day when I tell him that I shall let you go to Paris without me, and you will see on his face, no matter what pains he takes to conceal it, his inward joy."

"Why should he feel so?"

"Why? Dear child! I am like Saint-Jean Bouched'Or. I will tell that to himself, and before you."

"But suppose I marry on condition that you do not leave me?" urged Natalie.

"Our separation is necessary," replied her mother. "Several considerations have greatly changed my future. I am now poor. You will lead a brilliant life in Paris, and I could not live with you suitably without spending the little that remains to me. Whereas, if I go to Lanstrac, I can take care of your property there and restore my fortune by economy."

"You, mamma! *you* practise economy!" cried Natalie, laughing. "Don't begin to be a grand-

mother yet. What! do you mean to leave me for such reasons as those? Dear mother, Paul may seem to you a trifle stupid, but he is not one atom selfish or grasping."

"Ah!" replied Madame Évangélista, in a tone of voice big with suggestions which made the girl's heart throb, "those discussions about the contract have made me distrustful. I have my doubts about him — But don't be troubled, dear child," she added, taking her daughter by the neck and kissing her. "I will not leave you long alone. Whenever my return can take place without making difficulty between you, whenever Paul can rightly judge me, we will begin once more our happy little life, our evening confidences —"

"Oh! mother, how can you think of living without your Natalie?"

"Because, dear angel, I shall live for her. My mother's heart will be satisfied in the thought that I contribute, as I ought, to your future happiness."

"But my dear, adorable mother, must I be alone with Paul, here, now, all at once? What will become of me? what will happen? what must I do? what must I not do?"

"Poor child! do you think that I would utterly abandon you to your first battle? We will write to each other three times a week like lovers. We shall thus be close to each other's heart incessantly. Nothing can happen to you that I shall not know, and I can save you from all misfortune. Besides, it would be too ridiculous if I never went to see you; it would seem to show dislike or disrespect to your husband;

I will always spend a month or two every year with you in Paris."

"Alone, already alone, and with him!" cried Natalie in terror, interrupting her mother.

"But you wish to be his wife?"

"Yes, I wish it. But tell me how I should behave, — you, who did what you pleased with my father. You know the way; I'll obey you blindly."

Madame Évangélista kissed her daughter's forehead. She had willed and awaited this request.

"Child, my counsels must adapt themselves to circumstances. All men are not alike. The lion and the frog are not more unlike than one man compared with another, — morally, I mean. Do I know to-day what will happen to you to-morrow? No; therefore I can only give you general advice upon the whole tenor of your conduct."

"Dear mother, tell me, quick, all that you know yourself."

"In the first place, my dear child, the cause of the failure of married women who desire to keep their husbands' hearts — and" she said, making a parenthesis, "to keep their hearts and rule them is one and the same thing — Well, the principle cause of conjugal disunion is to be found in perpetual intercourse, which never existed in the olden time, but which has been introduced into this country of late years with the mania for family. Since the Revolution the manners and customs of the bourgeoisie have invaded the homes of aristocracy. This misfortune is due to one of their writers, Rousseau, an infamous heretic, whose ideas were all anti-social and who pre-

tended, I don't know how, to justify the most senseless things. He declared that all women had the same rights and the same faculties; that living in a state of society we ought, nevertheless, to obey nature — as if the wife of a Spanish grandee, as if you or I had anything in common with the women of the people! Since then, well-bred women have suckled their children, have educated their daughters, and stayed in their own homes. Life has become so involved that happiness is almost impossible, — for a perfect harmony between natures such as that which has made you and me live as two friends is an exception. Perpetual contact is as dangerous for parents and children as it is for husband and wife. There are few souls in which love survives this fatal omnipresence. Therefore, I say, erect between yourself and Paul the barriers of society; go to balls and operas; go out in the morning, dine out in the evenings, pay visits constantly, and grant but little of your time to your husband. By this means you will always keep your value to him. When two beings bound together for life have nothing to live upon but sentiment, its resources are soon exhausted, indifference, satiety, and disgust succeed. When sentiment has withered what will become of you? Remember, affection once extinguished can lead to nothing but indifference or contempt. Be ever young and ever new to him. He may weary you, — that often happens, — but you must never weary him. The faculty of being bored without showing it is a condition of all species of power. You cannot diversify happiness by the cares of property or the occupations of a family. If you do not

make your husband share your social interests, if you do not keep him amused you will fall into a dismal apathy. Then begins the *spleen* of love. But a man will always love the woman who amuses him and keeps him happy. To give happiness and to receive it are two lines of feminine conduct which are separated by a gulf."

"Dear mother, I am listening to you, but I don't understand one word you say."

"If you love Paul to the extent of doing all he asks of you, if you make your happiness depend on him, all is over with your future life; you will never be mistress of your home, and the best precepts in the world will do you no good."

"That is plainer; but I see the rule without knowing how to apply it," said Natalie, laughing. "I have the theory; the practice will come."

"My poor Ninie," replied the mother, who dropped an honest tear at the thought of her daughter's marriage, things will happen to teach it to you — And," she continued, after a pause, during which the mother and daughter held each other closely embraced in the truest sympathy, "remember this, my Natalie: we all have our destiny as women, just as men have their vocation as men. A woman is born to be a woman of the world and a charming hostess, as a man is born to be a general or a poet. Your vocation is to please. Your education has formed you for society. In these days women should be educated for the salon as they once were for the gynœcium. You were not born to be the mother of a family or the steward of a household. If you have children, I hope they will not come

to spoil your figure on the morrow of your marriage; nothing is so bourgeois as to have a child at once. If you have them two or three years after your marriage, well and good; governesses and tutors will bring them up. You are to be the lady, the great lady, who represents the luxury and the pleasure of the house. But remember one thing — let your superiority be visible in those things only which flatter a man's self-love; hide the superiority you must also acquire over him in great things.

"But you frighten me, mamma," cried Natalie. "How can I remember all these precepts? How shall I ever manage, I, such a child, and so heedless, to reflect and calculate before I act?"

"But, my dear little girl, I am telling you to-day that which you must surely learn later, buying your experience by fatal faults and errors of conduct which will cause you bitter regrets and embarrass your whole life."

"But how must I begin?" asked Natalie, artlessly.

"Instinct will guide you," replied her mother. "At this moment Paul desires you more than he loves you; for love born of desires is a hope; the love that succeeds their satisfaction is the reality. There, my dear, is the question; there lies your power. What woman is not loved before marriage? Be so on the morrow and you will remain so always. Paul is a weak man who is easily trained to habit. If he yields to you once he will yield always. A woman ardently desired can ask all things; do not commit the folly of many women who do not see the importance of the first hours of their sway, — that of wasting your power

on trifles, on silly things with no result. Use the empire your husband's first emotions give you to accustom him to obedience. And when you make him yield, choose that it be on some unreasonable point, so as to test the measure of your power by the measure of his concession. What victory would there be in making him agree to a reasonable thing? Would that be obeying you? We must always, as the Castilian proverb says, take the bull by the horns; when a bull has once seen the inutility of his defence and of his strength he is beaten. When your husband does a foolish thing for you, you can govern him."

"Why so?"

"Because, my child, marriage lasts a lifetime, and a husband is not a man like other men. Therefore, never commit the folly of giving yourself into his power in anything. Keep up a constant reserve in your speech and in your actions. You may even be cold to him without danger, for you can modify coldness at will. Besides, nothing is more easy to maintain than our dignity. The words, "It is not becoming in your wife to do thus and so," is a great talisman. The life of a woman lies in the words, "I will not." They are the final argument. Feminine power is in them, and therefore they should only be used on real occasions. But they constitute a means of governing far beyond that of argument or discussion. I, my dear child, reigned over your father by his faith in me. If your husband believes in you, you can do all things with him. To inspire that belief you must make him think that you understand him. Do not suppose that that is an easy thing to do. A woman can always make a

man think that he is loved, but to make him admit that he is understood is far more difficult. I am bound to tell you all now, my child, for to-morrow life with its complications, life with two wills which *must* be made one, begins for you. Bear in mind, at all moments, that difficulty. The only means of harmonizing your two wills is to arrange from the first that there shall be but one: and that will must be yours. Many persons declare that a wife creates her own unhappiness by changing sides in this way; but, my dear, she can only become the mistress by controlling events instead of bearing them; and that advantage compensates for any difficulty."

Natalie kissed her mother's hands with tears of gratitude. Like all women in whom mental emotion is never warmed by physical emotion, she suddenly comprehended the bearings of this feminine policy; but, like a spoiled child that never admits the force of reason and returns obstinately to its one desire, she came back to the charge with one of those personal arguments which the logic of a child suggests: —

"Dear mamma," she said, "it is only a few days since you were talking of Paul's advancement, and saying that you alone could promote it; why, then, do you suddenly turn round and abandon us to our selves?"

"I did not then know the extent of my obligations nor the amount of my debts," replied the mother, who would not suffer her real motive to be seen. "Besides, a year or two hence I can take up that matter again. Come, let us dress; Paul will be here soon. Be as sweet and caressing as you were, — you know? — that

night when we first discussed this fatal contract; for to-day we must save the last fragments of our fortune, and I must win for you a thing to which I am superstitiously attached."

"What is it?"

"The *Discreto*."

Paul arrived about four o'clock. Though he endeavored to meet his mother-in-law with a gracious look upon his face, Madame Évangélista saw traces of the clouds which the counsels of the night and the reflections of the morning had brought there.

"Mathias has told him!" she thought, resolving to defeat the old notary's action. "My dear son," she said, "you left your diamonds in the drawer of the console, and I frankly confess that I would rather not see again the things that threatened to bring a cloud between us. Besides, as Monsieur Mathias said, they ought to be sold at once to meet the first payment on the estates you have purchased."

"They are not mine," he said. "I have given them to Natalie, and when you see them upon her you will forget the pain they caused you."

Madame Évangélista took his hand and pressed it cordially, with a tear of emotion.

"Listen to me, my dear children," she said, looking from Paul to Natalie; "since you really feel thus, I have a proposition to make to both of you. I find myself obliged to sell my pearl necklace and my earrings. Yes, Paul, it is necessary; I do not choose to put a penny of my fortune into an annuity; I know what I owe to you. Well, I admit a weakness; to sell the *Discreto* seems to me a disaster. To sell a

diamond which bears the name of Philip the Second and once adorned his royal hand, an historic stone which the Duke of Alba touched for ten years in the hilt of his sword — no, no, I cannot! Élie Magus estimates my necklace and ear-rings at a hundred and some odd thousand francs without the clasps. Will you exchange the other jewels I made over to you for these? you will gain by the transaction, but what of that? I am not selfish. Instead of those mere fancy jewels, Paul, your wife will have fine diamonds which she can really enjoy. Is n't it better that I should sell those ornaments which will surely go out of fashion, and that you should keep in the family these priceless stones?"

"But, my dear mother, consider yourself," said Paul.

"I," replied Madame Évangélista, "I want such things no longer. Yes. Paul, I am going to be your bailiff at Lanstrac. It would be folly in me to go to Paris at the moment when I ought to be here to liquidate my property and settle my affairs. I shall grow miserly for my grandchildren."

"Dear mother," said Paul, much moved, "ought I to accept this exchange without paying you the difference?"

"Good heavens! are you not, both of you, my dearest interests? Do you suppose I shall not find happiness in thinking, as I sit in my chimney-corner, 'Natalie is dazzling to-night at the Duchesse de Berry's ball'? When she sees my diamond at her throat and my ear-rings in her ears she will have one of those little enjoyments of vanity which contribute

so much to a woman's happiness and make her so gay and fascinating. Nothing saddens a woman more than to have her vanity repressed; I have never seen an ill-dressed woman who was amiable or good-humored."

"Heavens! what was Mathias thinking about?" thought Paul. "Well, then, mamma," he said, in a low voice, "I accept."

"But I am confounded!" said Natalie.

At this moment Solonet arrived to announce the good news that he had found among the speculators of Bordeaux two contractors who were much attracted by the house, the gardens of which could be covered with dwellings.

"They offer two hundred and fifty thousand francs," he said; "but if you consent to the sale, I can make them give you three hundred thousand. There are three acres of land in the garden."

"My husband paid two hundred thousand for the place, therefore I consent," she replied. "But you must reserve the furniture and the mirrors."

"Ah!" said Solonet, "you are beginning to understand business."

"Alas! I must," she said, sighing.

"I am told that a great many persons are coming to your midnight service," said Solonet, perceiving that his presence was inopportune, and preparing to go.

Madame Évangélista accompanied him to the door of the last salon, and there she said, in a low voice:—

"I now have personal property to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand francs; if I can get two

hundred thousand for my share on the sale of the house it will make a handsome capital, which I shall want to invest to the very best advantage. I count on you for that. I shall probably live at Lanstrac."

The young notary kissed his client's hand with a gesture of gratitude; for the widow's tone of voice made Solonet fancy that this alliance, really made from self-interest only, might extend a little farther.

"You can count on me," he replied. "I can find you investments in merchandise on which you will risk nothing and make very considerable profits."

"Adieu until to-morrow," she said; "you are to be our witness, you know, with Monsieur le Marquis de Gyas."

"My dear mother," said Paul, when she returned to them, "why do you refuse to come to Paris? Natalie is provoked with me, as if I were the cause of your decision."

"I have thought it all over, my children, and I am sure that I should hamper you. You would feel obliged to make me a third in all you did, and young people have ideas of their own which I might, unintentionally, thwart. Go to Paris. I do not wish to exercise over the Comtesse de Manerville the gentle authority I have held over Natalie. I desire to leave her wholly to you. Don't you see, Paul, that there are habits and ways between us which must be broken up? My influence ought to yield to yours. I want you to love me, and to believe that I have your interests more at heart than you think for. Young husbands are, sooner or later, jealous of the love of a wife for her mother. Perhaps they are right. When

you are thoroughly united, when love has blended your two souls into one, then, my dear son, you will not fear an opposing influence if I live in your house. I know the world, and men, and things; I have seen the peace of many a home destroyed by the blind love of mothers who made themselves in the end as intolerable to their daughters as to their sons-in-law. The affection of old people is often exacting and querulous. Perhaps I could not efface myself as I should. I have the weakness to think myself still handsome; I have flatterers who declare that I am still agreeable; I should have, I fear, certain pretensions which might interfere with your lives. Let me, therefore, make one more sacrifice for your happiness. I have given you my fortune, and now I desire to resign to you my last vanities as a woman. Your notary Mathias is getting old. He cannot look after your estates as I will. I will be your bailiff; I will create for myself those natural occupations which are the pleasures of old age. Later, if necessary, I will come to you in Paris, and second you in your projects of ambition. Come, Paul, be frank; my proposal suits you, does it not?"

Paul would not admit it, but he was at heart delighted to get his liberty. The suspicions which Mathias had put into his mind respecting his mother-in-law were, however, dissipated by this conversation, which Madame Évangélista carried on still longer in the same tone.

"My mother was right," thought Natalie, who had watched Paul's countenance. "He is glad to know that I am separated from her — why?"

That "why?" was the first note of a rising distrust; did it prove the power of those maternal instructions?

There are certain characters which on the faith of a single proof believe in friendship. To persons thus constituted the north wind drives away the clouds as rapidly as the south wind brings them; they stop at effects and never hark back to causes. Paul had one of those essentially confiding natures, without ill-feelings, but also without foresight. His weakness proceeded far more from his kindness, his belief in goodness, than from actual debility of soul.

Natalie was sad and thoughtful, for she knew not what to do without her mother. Paul, with that self-confident conceit which comes of love, smiled to himself at her sadness, thinking how soon the pleasures of marriage and the excitements of Paris would drive it away. Madame Évangélista saw this confidence with much satisfaction. She had already taken two great steps. Her daughter possessed the diamonds which had cost Paul two hundred thousand francs; and she had gained her point of leaving these two children to themselves with no other guide than their illogical love. Her revenge was thus preparing, unknown to her daughter, who would, sooner or later, become its accomplice. Did Natalie love Paul? That was a question still undecided, the answer to which might modify her projects, for she loved her daughter too sincerely not to respect her happiness. Paul's future, therefore, still depended on himself. If he could make his wife love him, he was saved.

The next day, at midnight, after an evening spent together, with the addition of the four witnesses, to

whom Madame Évangélista gave the formal dinner which follows the legal marriage, the bridal pair, accompanied by their friends, heard mass by torch-light, in presence of a crowd of inquisitive persons. A marriage celebrated at night always suggests to the mind an unpleasant omen. Light is the symbol of life and pleasure, the forecasts of which are lacking to a midnight wedding. Ask the intrepid soul why it shivers; why the chill of those black arches enervates it; why the sound of steps startles it; why it notices the cry of bats and the hoot of owls. Though there is absolutely no reason to tremble, all present do tremble, and the darkness, emblem of death, saddens them. Natalie, parted from her mother, wept. The girl was now a prey to those doubts which grasp the heart as it enters a new career in which, despite all assurances of happiness, a thousand pitfalls await the steps of a young wife. She was cold and wanted a mantle. The air and manner of Madame Évangélista and that of the bridal pair excited some comment among the elegant crowd which surrounded the altar.

"Solonet tells me that the bride and bridegroom leave for Paris to-morrow morning, all alone."

"Madame Évangélista was to live with them, I thought."

"Count Paul has got rid of her already."

"What a mistake!" said the Marquise de Gyas. "To shut the door on the mother of his wife is to open it to a lover. Does n't he know what a mother is?"

"He has been very hard on Madame Évangélista; the poor woman has had to sell her house and her diamonds, and is going to live at Lanstrac."

"Natalie looks very sad."

"Would you like to be made to take a journey the day after your marriage?"

"It is very awkward."

"I am glad I came here to-night," said a lady. "I am now convinced of the necessity of the pomps of marriage and of wedding fêtes; a scene like this is very bare and sad. If I may say what I think," she added, in a whisper to her neighbor, "this marriage seems to me indecent."

Madame Évangélista took Natalie in her carriage and accompanied her, alone, to Paul's house.

"Well, mother, it is done!"

"Remember, my dear child, my last advice, and you will be a happy woman. Be his wife, and not his mistress."

When Natalie had retired, the mother played the little comedy of flinging herself with tears into the arms of her son-in-law. It was the only provincial thing that Madame Évangélista allowed herself, but she had her reasons for it. Amid tears and speeches, apparently half wild and despairing, she obtained of Paul those concessions which all husbands make.

The next day she put the married pair into their carriage, and accompanied them to the ferry, by which the road to Paris crosses the Gironde. With a look and a word Natalie enabled her mother to see that if Paul had won the trick in the game of the contract, her revenge was beginning. Natalie was already reducing her husband to perfect obedience.

VI.

CONCLUSION.

FIVE years later, on an afternoon in the month of November, Comte Paul de Manerville, wrapped in a cloak, was entering, with a bowed head and a mysterious manner, the house of his old friend Monsieur Mathias at Bordeaux.

Too old to continue in business, the worthy notary had sold his practice and was ending his days peacefully in a quiet house to which he had retired. An urgent affair had obliged him to be absent at the moment of his guest's arrival, but his housekeeper, warned of Paul's coming, took him to the room of the late Madame Mathias, who had been dead a year. Fatigued by a rapid journey, Paul slept till evening. When the old man reached home he went up to his client's room, and watched him sleeping, as a mother watches her child. Josette, the old housekeeper, followed her master and stood before the bed, her hands on her hips.

"It is a year to-day, Josette, since I received my dear wife's last sigh; I little knew then that I should stand here again to see the count half dead."

"Poor man! he moans in his sleep," said Josette.

"*Sac à papier!*" cried the old notary, an innocent oath which was a sign with him of the despair on a

man of business before insurmountable difficulties. "At any rate," he thought, "I have saved the title to the Lanstrac estate for him, and that of Ausac, Saint-Froult, and his house, though the usufruct has gone." Mathias counted on his fingers. "Five years! Just five years this month, since his old aunt, now dead, that excellent Madame de Maulincour, asked for the hand of that little crocodile of a woman, who has finally ruined him — as I expected."

And the gouty old gentleman, leaning on his cane, went to walk in the little garden till his guest should awake. At nine o'clock supper was served, for Mathias took supper. The old man was not a little astonished, when Paul joined him, to see that his old client's brow was calm and his face serene, though noticeably changed. If at the age of thirty-three the Comte de Manerville seemed to be a man of forty, that change in his appearance was due solely to mental shocks; physically, he was well. He clasped the old man's hand affectionately, and forced him not to rise, saying: —

"Dear, kind Maître Mathias, you, too, have had your troubles."

"Mine were natural troubles, Monsieur le comte; but yours —"

"We will talk of that presently, while we sup."

"If I had not a son in the magistracy, and a daughter married," said the good old man, "you would have found in old Mathias, believe me, Monsieur le comte, something better than mere hospitality. Why have you come to Bordeaux at the very moment when posters are on all the walls of the seizure of your farms at

Grassol and Guadet, the vineyard of Belle-Rose and the family mansion? I cannot tell you the grief I feel at the sight of those placards, — I, who for forty years nursed that property as if it belonged to me; I, who bought it for your mother when I was only third clerk to Monsieur Chesnau, my predecessor, and wrote the deeds myself in my best round hand; I, who have those titles now in my successor's office; I, who have known you since you were so high;" and the old man stooped to put his hand near the ground. "Ah! a man must have been a notary for forty-one years and a half to know the sort of grief I feel to see my name exposed before the face of Israel in those announcements of the seizure and sale of the property. When I pass through the streets and see men reading those horrible yellow posters, I am ashamed, as if my own honor and ruin were concerned. Some fools will stand there and read them aloud expressly to draw other fools about them — and what imbecile remarks they make! As if a man were not master of his own property! Your father ran through two fortunes before he made the one he left you; and you would n't be a Manerville if you did n't do likewise. Besides, seizures of real estate have a whole section of the Code to themselves; they are expected and provided for; you are in a position recognized by the law. — If I were not an old man with white hair, I would thrash those fools I hear reading aloud in the streets such an abomination as this," added the worthy notary, taking up a paper: "'At the request of Dame Natalie Évangélista, wife of Paul-François-Joseph, Comte de Manerville, separated from him as to

worldly goods and chattels by the Lower court of the department of the Seine — ’ ’

“Yes, and now separated in body,” said Paul.

“Ah!” exclaimed the old man.

“Oh! against my wife’s will,” added the count, hastily. “I was forced to deceive her; she did not know that I was leaving her.”

“You have left her?”

“My passage is taken; I sail for Calcutta on the ‘Belle-Amélie.’ ”

“Two days hence!” cried the notary. “Then, Monsieur le comte, we shall never meet again.”

“You are only seventy-three, my dear Mathias, and you have the gout, the brevet of old age. When I return I shall find you still afoot. Your good head and heart will be as sound as ever, and you will help me to reconstruct what is now a shaken edifice. I intend to make a noble fortune in seven years. I shall be only forty on my return. All is still possible at that age.”

“You?” said Mathias, with a gesture of amazement, — you, Monsieur le comte, to undertake commerce! How can you even think of it?”

“I am no longer Monsieur le comte, dear Mathias. My passage is taken under the name of Camille, one of my mother’s baptismal names. I have acquirements which will enable me to make my fortune otherwise than in business. Commerce, at any rate, will be only my final chance. I start with a sum in hand sufficient for the redemption of my future on a large scale.”

“Where is that money?”

"A friend is to send it to me."

The old man dropped his fork as he heard the word "friend," not in surprise, not scoffingly, but in grief; his look and manner expressed the pain he felt in finding Paul under the influence of a deceitful illusion; his practised eye fathomed a gulf where the count saw nothing but solid ground.

"I have been fifty years in the notariat," he said, "and I never yet knew a ruined man whose friends would lend him money."

"You don't know de Marsay. I am certain that he has sold out some of his investments already, and to-morrow you will receive from him a bill of exchange for one hundred and fifty thousand francs."

"I hope I may. If that be so, cannot your friend settle your difficulties here? You could live quietly at Lanstrac for five or six years on your wife's income, and so recover yourself."

"No assignment or economy on my part could pay off fifteen hundred thousand francs of debt, in which my wife is involved to the amount of five hundred and fifty thousand."

"You cannot mean to say that in four years you have incurred a million and a half of debt?"

"Nothing is more certain, Mathias. Did I not give those diamonds to my wife? Did I not spend the hundred and fifty thousand I received from the sale of Madame Évangélista's house, in the arrangement of my house in Paris? Was I not forced to use other money for the first payments on that property demanded by the marriage contract? I was even forced to sell out Natalie's forty thousand a year in

the Funds to complete the purchase of Auzac and Saint-Froult. We sold at eighty-seven, therefore I became in debt for over two hundred thousand francs within a month after my marriage. That left us only sixty-seven thousand francs a year; but we spent fully three times as much every year. Add all that up, together with rates of interest to usurers, and you will soon find a million."

"Br-r-r!" exclaimed the old notary. "Go on. What next?"

"Well, I wanted, in the first place, to complete for my wife that set of jewels of which she had the pearl necklace clasped by the family diamond, the *Discreto*, and her mother's ear-rings. I paid a hundred thousand francs for a coronet of diamond wheat-ears. There's eleven hundred thousand. And now I find I owe the fortune of my wife, which amounts to three hundred and sixty-six thousand francs of her *dot*."

"But," said Mathias, "if Madame la comtesse had given up her diamonds and you had pledged your income you could have pacified your creditors and have paid them off in time."

"When a man is down, Mathias, when his property is covered with mortgages, when his wife's claims take precedence of his creditors', and when that man has notes out for a hundred thousand francs which he must pay (and I hope I can do so out of the increased value of my property here), what you propose is not possible."

"This is dreadful!" cried Mathias; "would you sell Belle-Rose with the vintage of 1825 still in the cellars?"

"I cannot help myself."

"Belle-Rose is worth six hundred thousand francs."

"Natalie will buy it in; I have advised her to do so."

"I might push the price to seven hundred thousand, and the farms are worth a hundred thousand each."

"Then if the house in Bordeaux can be sold for two hundred thousand —"

"Solonet will give more than that; he wants it. He is retiring with a handsome property made by gambling on the Funds. He has sold his practice for three hundred thousand francs, and marries a mulatto woman. God knows how she got her money, but they say it amounts to millions. A notary gambling in stocks! a notary marrying a black woman! What an age! It is said that he speculates for your mother-in-law with her funds."

"She has greatly improved Lanstrac and taken great pains with its cultivation. She has amply repaid me for the use of it."

"I should n't have thought her capable of that."

"She is so kind and so devoted; she has always paid Natalie's debts during the three months she spent with us every year in Paris."

"She could well afford to do so, for she gets her living out of Lanstrac," said Mathias. "She! grown economical! what a miracle! I am told she has just bought the domain of Grainrouge between Lanstrac and Grassol; so that if the Lanstrac avenue were extended to the high-road, you would drive four and a half miles through your own property to reach the house. She paid one hundred thousand francs down for Grainrouge."

"She is as handsome as ever," said Paul; "country life preserves her freshness; I don't mean to go to Lanstrac and bid her good-bye; her heart would bleed for me too much."

"You would go in vain; she is now in Paris. She probably arrived there as you left."

"No doubt she had heard of the sale of my property and came to help me. I have no complaint to make of life, Mathias. I am truly loved, — as much as any man ever could be here below; beloved by two women who outdo each other in devotion; they are even jealous of each other; the daughter blames the mother for loving me too much, and the mother reproaches the daughter for what she calls her dissipations. I may say that this great affection has been my ruin. How could I fail to satisfy even the slightest caprice of a loving wife? Impossible to restrain myself! Neither could I accept any sacrifice on her part. We might certainly, as you say, live at Lanstrac, save my income, and part with her diamonds, but I would rather go to India and work for a fortune than tear my Natalie from the life she enjoys. So it was I who proposed the separation as to property. Women are angels who ought not to be mixed up in the sordid interests of life."

Old Mathias listened in doubt and amazement.

"You have no children, I think," he said.

"Fortunately, none," replied Paul.

"That is not my idea of marriage," remarked the old notary, naively. "A wife ought, in my opinion, to share the good and evil fortunes of her husband. I have heard that young married people who love like

lovers, do not want children? Is pleasure the only object of marriage? I say that object should be the joys of family. Moreover, in this case — I am afraid you will think me too much of notary — your marriage contract made it incumbent upon you to have a son. Yes, Monsieur le comte, you ought to have had at once a male heir to consolidate that entail. Why not? Mademoiselle Évangélista was strong and healthy; she had nothing to fear in maternity. You will tell me, perhaps, that these are the old-fashioned notions of our ancestors. But in those noble families, Monsieur le comte, the legitimate wife thought it her duty to bear children and bring them up nobly; as the Duchesse de Sully, the wife of the great Sully, said, a wife is not an instrument of pleasure, but the honor and virtue of her household."

"You don't know women, my good Mathias," said Paul. "In order to be happy we must love them as they want to be loved. Is n't there something brutal in at once depriving a wife of her charms, and spoiling her beauty before she has begun to enjoy it?"

"If you had had children your wife would not have dissipated your fortune; she would have stayed at home and looked after them."

"If you were right, dear friend," said Paul, frowning, "I should be still more unhappy than I am. Do not aggravate my sufferings by preaching to me after my fall. Let me go, without the pang of looking backward to mistakes."

The next day Mathias received a bill of exchange for one hundred and fifty thousand francs from de Marsay.

"You see," said Paul, "he does not write a word to me. He begins by obliging me. Henri's nature is the most imperfectly perfect, the most illegally beautiful that I know. If you knew with what superiority that man, still young, can rise above sentiments, above self-interests, and judge them, you would be astonished, as I am, to find how much heart he has."

Mathias tried to battle with Paul's determination, but he found it irrevocable, and it was justified by so many cogent reasons that the old man finally ceased his endeavors to retain his client.

It is seldom that vessels sail promptly at the time appointed, but on this occasion, by a fateful circumstance for Paul, the wind was fair and the "*Belle-Amélie*" sailed on the morrow, as expected. The quay was lined with relations, and friends, and idle persons. Among them were several who had formerly known Manerville. His disaster, posted on the walls of the town, made him as celebrated as he was in the days of his wealth and fashion. Curiosity was aroused; every one had their word to say about him. Old Mathias accompanied his client to the quay, and his sufferings were sore as he caught a few words of those remarks: —

"Who could recognize in that man you see over there, near old Mathias, the dandy who was called the Pink of Fashion five years ago, and made, as they say, 'fair weather and foul' in Bordeaux."

"What! that stout, short man in the alpaca overcoat, who looks like a groom, — is that Comte Paul de Manerville?"

"Yes, my dear, the same who married Mademoiselle

Évangélista. Here he is, ruined, without a penny to his name, going out to India to look for luck."

"But how did he ruin himself? he was very rich."

"Oh! Paris, women, play, luxury, gambling at the Bourse —"

"Besides," said another, "Manerville always was a poor creature; no mind, soft as papier-mâché, he'd let anybody shear the wool from his back; incapable of anything, no matter what. He was born to be ruined."

Paul wrung the hand of the old man and went on board. Mathias stood upon the pier, looking at his client, who leaned against the shrouds, defying the crowd before him with a glance of contempt. At the moment when the sailors began to weigh anchor, Paul noticed that Mathias was making signals to him with his handkerchief. The old housekeeper had hurried to her master, who seemed to be excited by some sudden event. Paul asked the captain to wait a moment, and send a boat to the pier, which was done. Too feeble himself to go aboard, Mathias gave two letters to a sailor in the boat.

"My friend," he said, "this packet" (showing one of the two letters) "is important; it has just arrived by a courier from Paris in thirty-five hours. State this to Monsieur le comte; don't neglect to do so; it may change his plans."

"Would he come ashore?"

"Possibly, my friend," said the notary, imprudently.

The sailor is, in all lands, a being of a race apart, holding all land-folk in contempt. This one happened

to be a bas-Breton, who saw but one thing in Maître Mathias's request.

"Come ashore, indeed!" he thought, as he rowed. "Make the captain lose a passenger! If one listened to those walruses we'd have nothing to do but embark and disembark 'em. He's afraid that son of his will catch cold."

The sailor gave Paul the letter and said not a word of the message. Recognizing the handwriting of his wife and de Marsay, Paul supposed that he knew what they both would urge upon him. Anxious not to be influenced by offers which he believed their devotion to his welfare would inspire, he put the letters in his pocket unread, with apparent indifference.

Absorbed in the sad thoughts which assail the strongest man under such circumstances, Paul gave way to his grief as he waved his hand to his old friend, and bade farewell to France, watching the steeples of Bordeaux as they fled out of sight. He seated himself on a coil of rope. Night overtook him still lost in thought. With the semi-darkness of the dying day came doubts; he cast an anxious eye into the future. Sounding it, and finding there uncertainty and danger, he asked his soul if courage would fail him. A vague dread seized his mind as he thought of Natalie left wholly to herself; he repented the step he had taken; he regretted Paris and his life there. Suddenly sea-sickness overcame him. Every one knows the effect of that disorder. The most horrible of its sufferings devoid of danger is a complete dissolution of the will. An inexplicable distress relaxes to their very centre the cords of vitality; the soul no longer

performs its functions; the sufferer becomes indifferent to everything; the mother forgets her child, the lover his mistress, the strongest man lies prone, like an inert mass. Paul was carried to his cabin, where he stayed three days, lying on his back, gorged with grog by the sailors, or vomiting; thinking of nothing, and sleeping much. Then he revived into a species of convalescence, and returned by degrees to his ordinary condition. The first morning after he felt better he went on deck and paced the poop, breathing in the salt breezes of another atmosphere. Putting his hands into his pockets he felt the letters. At once he opened them, beginning with that of his wife.

In order that the letter of the Comtesse de Manerville be fully understood, it is necessary to give the one which Paul had written to her on the day that he left Paris.

From Paul de Manerville to his wife :

MY BELOVED, — When you read this letter I shall be far away from you; perhaps already on the vessel which is to take me to India, where I am going to repair my shattered fortune.

I have not found courage to tell you of my departure. I have deceived you; but it was best to do so. You would only have been uselessly distressed; you would have wished to sacrifice your fortune, and that I could not have suffered. Dear Natalie, feel no remorse; I have no regrets. When I return with millions I shall imitate your father and lay them at your feet, as he laid his at the feet of your mother, saying to you: "All I have is yours."

I love you madly, Natalie; I say this without fear that the avowal will lead you to strain a power which none but weak men fear; yours has been boundless from the day I knew you first. My love is the only accomplice in my disaster. I have felt, as my ruin progressed, the delirious joys of a gambler; as the money diminished, so my enjoyment grew. Each fragment of my fortune turned into some little pleasure for you gave me untold happiness. I could have wished that you had more caprices that I might gratify them all. I knew I was marching to a precipice, but I went on crowned with joys of which a common heart knows nothing. I have acted like those lovers who take refuge in a cottage on the shores of some lake for a year or two, resolved to kill themselves at last; dying thus in all the glory of their illusions and their love. I have always thought such persons infinitely sensible.

You have known nothing of my pleasures or my sacrifices. The greatest joy of all was to hide from the one beloved the cost of her desires. I can reveal these secrets to you now, for when you hold this paper, heavy with love, I shall be far away. Though I lose the treasures of your gratitude, I do not suffer that contraction of the heart which would disable me if I spoke to you of these matters. Besides, my own beloved, is there not a tender calculation in thus revealing to you the history of the past? Does it not extend our love into the future? — But we need no such supports! We love each other with a love to which proof is needless, — a love which takes no note of time or distance, but lives of itself alone.

Ah! Natalie, I have just looked at you asleep, trustful, restful as a little child, your hand stretched toward me. I left a tear upon the pillow which has known our precious joys. I leave you without fear, on the faith of that attitude; I go to win the future of our love by bringing home to you a fortune large enough to gratify your every taste, and let no shadow of anxiety disturb our joys. Neither you nor I can do without enjoyments in the life we live. To me belongs the task of providing the necessary fortune. I am a man; and I have courage.

Perhaps you might seek to follow me. For that reason I conceal from you the name of the vessel, the port from which I sail, and the day of sailing. After I am gone, when too late to follow me, a friend will tell you all.

Natalie! my affection is boundless. I love you as a mother loves her child, as a lover loves his mistress, with absolute unselfishness. To me the toil, to you the pleasures; to me all sufferings, to you all happiness. Amuse yourself; continue your habits of luxury; go to theatres and operas, enjoy society and balls; I leave you free for all things. Dear angel, when you return to this nest where for five years we have tasted the fruits which love has ripened think of your friend; think for a moment of me, and rest upon my heart.

That is all I ask of you. For myself, dear eternal thought of mine! whether under burning skies, toiling for both of us, I face obstacles to vanquish, or whether, weary with the struggle, I rest my mind on hopes of a return, I shall think of you alone; of you

who are my life, — my blessed life! Yes, I shall live in you. I shall tell myself daily that you have no troubles, no cares; that you are happy. As in our natural lives of day and night, of sleeping and waking, I shall have sunny days in Paris, and nights of toil in India, — a painful dream, a joyful reality; and I shall live so utterly in that reality that my actual life will pass as a dream. I shall have memories! I shall recall, line by line, strophe by strophe, our glorious five years' poem. I shall remember the days of your pleasure in some new dress or some adornment which made you to my eyes a fresh delight. Yes, dear angel, I go like a man vowed to some great emprise, the guerdon of which, if success attend him, is the recovery of his beautiful mistress. Oh! my precious love, my Natalie, keep me as a religion in your heart. Be the child that I have just seen asleep! If you betray my confidence, my blind confidence, you need not fear my anger — be sure of that; I should die silently. But a wife does not deceive the man who leaves her free — for woman is never base. She tricks a tyrant; but an easy treachery, which would kill its victim, she will not commit — No, no! I will not think of it. Forgive this cry, this single cry, so natural to the heart of man!

Dear love, you will see de Marsay; he is now the lessee of our house, and he will leave you in possession of it. This nominal lease was necessary to avoid a useless loss. Our creditors, ignorant that their payment is a question of time only, would otherwise have seized the furniture and the temporary possession of the house. Be kind to de Marsay; I have the most

entire confidence in his capacity and his loyalty. Take him as your defender and adviser, make him your slave. However occupied, he will always find time to be devoted to you. I have placed the liquidation of my affairs and the payment of the debts in his hands. If he should advance some sum of which he should later feel in need I rely on you to pay it back. Remember, however, that I do not leave you to de Marsay, but *to yourself*; I do not seek to impose him upon you.

Alas! I have but an hour more to stay beside you; I cannot spend that hour in writing business — I count your breaths; I try to guess your thoughts in the slight motions of your sleep. I would I could infuse my blood into your veins that you might be a part of me, my thought your thought, and your heart mine — A murmur has just escaped your lips as though it were a soft reply. Be calm and beautiful forever as you are now! Ah! would that I possessed that fabulous fairy power which, with a wand, could make you sleep while I am absent, until, returning, I should wake you with a kiss.

How much I must love you, how much energy of soul I must possess, to leave you as I see you now! Adieu, my cherished one. Your poor Pink of Fashion is blown away by stormy winds, but — the wings of his good luck shall waft him back to you. No, my Ninie, I am not bidding you farewell, for I shall never leave you. Are you not the soul of my actions? Is not the hope of returning with happiness indestructible for *you* the end and aim of my endeavor? Does it not lead my every step? You will be with me every

where. Ah! it will not be the sun of India, but the fire of your eyes that lights my way. Therefore be happy — as happy as a woman can be without her lover. I would the last kiss that I take from those dear lips were not a passive one; but, my Ninie, my adored one, I will not wake you. When you wake, you will find a tear upon your forehead — make it a talisman! Think, think of him who may, perhaps, die for you, far from you; think less of the husband than of the lover who confides you to God.

From the Comtesse de Manerville to her husband :

DEAR, BELOVED ONE, — Your letter has plunged me into affliction. Had you the right to take this course, which must affect us equally, without consulting me? Are you free? Do you not belong to me? If you must go, why should I not follow you? You show me, Paul, that I am not indispensable to you. What have I done, to be deprived of my rights? Surely I count for something in this ruin. My luxuries have weighed somewhat in the scale. You make me curse the happy, careless life we have led for the last five years. To know that you are banished from France for years is enough to kill me. How soon can a fortune be made in India? Will you ever return?

I was right when I refused, with instinctive obstinacy, that separation as to property which my mother and you were so determined to carry out. What did I tell you then? Did I not warn you that it was casting a reflection upon you, and would ruin your credit? It was not until you were really angry that I gave way.

My dear Paul, never have you been so noble in my eyes as you are at this moment. To despair of nothing, to start courageously to seek a fortune! Only your character, your strength of mind could do it. I sit at your feet. A man who avows his weakness with your good faith, who rebuilds his fortune from the same motive that made him wreck it, for love's sake, for the sake of an irresistible passion, oh, Paul, that man is sublime! Therefore, fear nothing; go on, through all obstacles, not doubting your Natalie — for that would be doubting yourself. Poor darling, you mean to live in me? And I shall ever be in you. I shall not be here; I shall be wherever you are, wherever you go.

Though your letter has caused me the keenest pain, it has also filled me with joy — you have made me know those two extremes! Seeing how you love me, I have been proud to learn that my love is truly felt. Sometimes I have thought that I loved you more than you loved me. Now, I admit myself vanquished, you have added the delightful superiority — of loving — to all the others with which you are blest. That precious letter in which your soul reveals itself will lie upon my heart during all your absence; for my soul, too, is in it; that letter is my glory.

I shall go to live at Lanstrac with my mother. I die to the world; I will economize my income and pay your debts to their last farthing. From this day forth, Paul, I am another woman. I bid farewell forever to society; I will have no pleasures that you cannot share. Besides, Paul, I ought to leave Paris and live in retirement. Dear friend, you will soon

have a double reason to make your fortune. If your courage needed a spur you would find it in this. Cannot you guess? We shall have a child. Your cherished desires are granted. I feared to give you one of those false hopes which hurt so much — have we not had grief enough already on that score? I was determined not to be mistaken in this good news. To-day I feel certain, and it makes me happy to shed this joy upon your sorrows.

This morning, fearing nothing and thinking you still at home, I went to the Assumption; all things smiled upon me; how could I foresee misfortune? As I left the church I met my mother; she had heard of your distress, and came, by post, with all her savings, thirty thousand francs, hoping to help you. Ah! what a heart is hers, Paul! I felt joyful, and hurried home to tell you this good news, and to breakfast with you in the greenhouse, where I ordered just the dainties that you like. Well, Augustine brought me your letter, — a letter from you, when we had slept together! A cold fear seized me; it was like a dream! I read your letter! I read it weeping, and my mother shared my tears. I was half-dead. Such love, such courage, such happiness, such misery! The richest fortunes of the heart, and the momentary ruin of all interests! To lose you at a moment when my admiration of your greatness thrilled me! what woman could have resisted such a tempest of emotion? To know you far away when your hand upon my heart would have stilled its throbbings; to feel that *you* were not here to give me that look so precious to me, to rejoice in our new hopes; that I was not with you to

soften your sorrows by those caresses which made your Natalie so dear to you! I wished to start, to follow you, to fly to you. But my mother told me you had taken passage in a ship which leaves Bordeaux tomorrow, that I could not reach you except by post, and, moreover, that it was madness in my present state to risk our future by attempting to follow you. I could not bear such violent emotions; I was taken ill, and am writing to you now in bed.

My mother is doing all she can to stop certain calumnies which seem to have got about on your disaster. The Vandenesses, Charles and Félix, have earnestly defended you; but your friend de Marsay treats the affair satirically. He laughs at your accusers instead of replying to them. I do not like his way of lightly brushing aside such serious attacks. Are you not deceived in him? However, I will obey you; I will make him my friend. Do not be anxious, my adored one, on the points that concern your honor; is it not mine as well? My diamonds shall be pledged; we intend, mamma and I, to employ our utmost resources in the payment of your debts; and we shall try to buy back your vineyard at Belle-Rose. My mother, who understands business like a lawyer, blames you very much for not having told her of your embarrassments. She would not have bought — thinking to please you — the Grainrouge domain, and then she could have lent you that money as well as the thirty thousand francs she brought with her. She is in despair at your decision; she fears the climate of India for your health. She entreats you to be sober, and not to let yourself be trapped by women — That

made me laugh; I am as sure of you as I am of myself. You will return to me rich and faithful. I alone know your feminine delicacy, and the secret sentiments which make you a human flower worthy of the gardens of heaven. The Bordeaux people were right when they gave you your floral nickname.

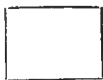
But alas! who will take care of my delicate flower? My heart is rent with dreadful ideas. I, his wife, Natalie, I am here, and perhaps he suffers far away from me! And not to share your pains, your vexations, your dangers! In whom will you confide? how will you live without that ear into which you have hitherto poured all? Dear, sensitive plant, swept away by this storm, will you be able to survive in another soil than your native land?

It seems to me that I have been alone for centuries. I have wept sorely. To be the cause of your ruin! What a text for the thoughts of a loving woman! You treated me like a child to whom we give all it asks, or like a courtesan, allowed by some thoughtless youth to squander his fortune. Ah! such indulgence was, in truth, an insult. Did you think I could not live without fine dresses, balls and operas and social triumphs? Am I so frivolous a woman? Do you think me incapable of serious thought, of ministering to your fortune as I have to your pleasures? If you were not so far away, and so unhappy, I would blame you for that impertinence. Why lower your wife in that way? Good heavens! what induced me to go into society at all? — to flatter your vanity; I adorned myself for you, as you well know. If I did wrong, I am punished, cruelly; your absence is a harsh expiation of our mutual life.

Perhaps my happiness was too complete; it had to be paid by some great trial — and here it is. There is nothing now for me but solitude. Yes, I shall live at Lanstrac, the place your father laid out, the house you yourself refurnished so luxuriously. There I shall live, with my mother and my child, and await you, — sending you daily, night and morning, the prayers of all. Remember that our love is a talisman against all evil. I have no more doubt of you than you can have of me. What comfort can I put into this letter, — I so desolate, so broken, with the lonely years before me, like a desert to cross. But no! I am not utterly unhappy; the desert will be brightened by our son, — yes, it must be a *son*, must it not?

And now, adieu, my own beloved; our love and prayers will follow you. The tears you see upon this paper will tell you much that I cannot write. I kiss you on this little square of paper, see! below. Take those kisses from

Your NATALIE.



This letter threw Paul into a revery caused as much by memories of the past as by these fresh assurances of love. The happier a man is, the more he trembles. In souls which are exclusively tender — and exclusive tenderness carries with it a certain amount of weakness — jealousy and uneasiness exist in direct proportion to the amount of the happiness and its extent. Strong souls are neither jealous nor fearful; jealousy

is doubt, fear is meanness. Unlimited belief is the principal attribute of a great man. If he is deceived (for strength as well as weakness may make a man a dupe) his contempt will serve him as an axe with which to cut through all. This greatness, however, is the exception. Which of us has not known what it is to be abandoned by the spirit which sustains our frail machine, and to hearken to that mysterious Voice denying all? Paul, his mind going over the past, and caught here and there by irrefutable facts, believed and doubted all. Lost in thought, a prey to an awful and involuntary incredulity, which was combated by the instincts of his own pure love and his faith in Natalie, he read and re-read that wordy letter, unable to decide the question which it raised either for or against his wife. Love is sometimes as great and true when smothered in words as it is in brief, strong sentences.

To understand the situation into which Paul de Manerville was about to enter we must think of him as he was at this moment, floating upon the ocean as he floated upon his past, looking back upon the years of his life as he looked at the limitless water and cloudless sky about him, and ending his revery by returning, through tumults of doubt, to faith, the pure, unalloyed and perfect faith of the Christian and the lover, which enforced the voice of his faithful heart.

It is necessary to give here his own letter to de Marsay written on leaving Paris, to which his friend replied in the letter he received through old Mathias from the dock: —

From Comte Paul de Manerville to Monsieur le Marquis Henri de Marsay :

HENRI, — I have to say to you one of the most vital words a man can say to his friend: — I am ruined. When you read this I shall be on the point of sailing from Bordeaux for Calcutta on the brig “Belle-Amélie.”

You will find in the hands of your notary a deed which only needs your signature to be legal. In it, I lease my house to you for six years at a nominal rent. Send a duplicate of that deed to my wife. I am forced to take this precaution that Natalie may continue to live in her own home without fear of being driven out by creditors.

I also convey to you by deed the income of my share of the entailed property for four years; the whole amounting to one hundred and fifty thousand francs, which sum I beg you to lend me and to send in a bill of exchange on some house in Bordeaux to my notary, Maître Mathias. My wife will give you her signature to this paper as an endorsement of your claim to my income. If the revenues of the entail do not pay this loan as quickly as I now expect, you and I will settle on my return. The sum I ask for is absolutely necessary to enable me to seek my fortune in India; and if I know you, I shall receive it in Bordeaux the night before I sail.

I have acted as you would have acted in my place. I held firm to the last moment, letting no one suspect my ruin. Before the news of the seizure of my property at Bordeaux reached Paris, I had attempted, with one hundred thousand francs which I obtained on

notes, to recover myself by play: Some lucky stroke might still have saved me. I lost.

How have I ruined myself? By my own will, Henri. From the first month of my married life I saw that I could not keep up the style in which I started. I knew the result; but I chose to shut my eyes; I could not say to my wife, "We must leave Paris and live at Lanstrac." I have ruined myself for her as men ruin themselves for a mistress, but I knew it all along. Between ourselves, I am neither a fool nor a weak man. A fool does not let himself be ruled with his eyes open by a passion; and a man who starts for India to reconstruct his fortune, instead of blowing out his brains, is not weak.

I shall return rich, or I shall never return at all. Only, my dear friend, as I want wealth solely for *her*, as I must be absent six years at least, and as I will not risk being duped in any way, I confide to you my wife. I know no better guardian. Being childless, a lover might be dangerous to her. Henri! I love her madly, basely, without proper pride. I would forgive her, I think, an infidelity, not because I am certain of avenging it, but because I would kill myself to leave her free and happy—since I could not make her happiness myself. But what have I to fear? Natalie feels for me that friendship which is independent of love, but which preserves love. I have treated her like a petted child. I took such delight in my sacrifices, one led so naturally to another, that she can never be false; she would be a monster if she were. Love begets love.

Alas! shall I tell you all, my dear Henri? I have

just written her a letter in which I let her think that I go with heart of hope and brow serene; that neither jealousy, nor doubt, nor fear is in my soul, — a letter, in short, such as a son might write to his mother, aware that he was going to his death. Good God! de Marsay, as I wrote it hell was in my soul! I am the most wretched man on earth. Yes, yes, to you the cries, to you the grinding of my teeth! I avow myself to you a despairing lover; I would rather live these six years sweeping the streets beneath her windows than return a millionaire at the end of them — if I could choose. I suffer agony; I shall pass from pain to pain until I hear from you that you will take the trust which you alone can fulfil or accomplish.

Oh! my dear de Marsay, this woman is indispensable to my life; she is my sun, my atmosphere. Take her under your shield and buckler, keep her faithful to me, even if she wills it not. Yes, I could be satisfied with a half-happiness. Be her guardian, her chaperon, for I could have no distrust of you. Prove to her that in betraying me she would do a low and vulgar thing, and be no better than the common run of women; tell her that faithfulness will prove her lofty spirit.

She probably has fortune enough to continue her life of luxury and ease. But if she lacks a pleasure, if she has caprices which she cannot satisfy, be her banker, and do not fear, I *will* return with wealth.

But, after all, these fears are vain! Natalie is an angel of purity and virtue. When Félix de Vandenesse fell deeply in love with her and began to show

her certain attentions, I had only to let her see the danger, and she instantly thanked me so affectionately that I was moved to tears. She said that her dignity and reputation demanded that she should not close her doors abruptly to any man, but that she knew well how to dismiss him. She did, in fact, receive him so coldly that the affair all ended for the best. We have never had any other subject of dispute — if, indeed, a friendly talk could be called a dispute — in all our married life.

And now, my dear Henri, I bid you farewell in the spirit of a man. Misfortune has come. No matter what the cause, it is here. I strip to meet it. Poverty and Natalie are two irreconcilable terms. The balance may be close between my assets and my liabilities, but no one shall have cause to complain of me. But, should any unforeseen event occur to imperil my honor, I count on you.

Send letters under cover to the Governor of India at Calcutta. I have friendly relations with his family, and some one there will care for all letters that come to me from Europe. Dear friend, I hope to find you the same de Marsay on my return, — the man who scoffs at everything and yet is receptive of the feelings of others when they accord with the grandeur he is conscious of in himself. You stay in Paris, friend; but when you read these words, I shall be crying out, "To Carthage!"

The Marquis Henri de Marsay to Comte Paul de Manerville :

So, so, Monsieur le comte, you have made a wreck of it! Monsieur l'ambassadeur has gone to the bottom! Are these the fine things that you were doing?

Why, Paul, why have you kept away from me? If you had said a single word, my poor old fellow, I would have made your position plain to you. Your wife has refused me her endorsement. May that one word unseal your eyes! But, if that does not suffice, learn that your notes have been protested at the instigation of a Sieur Lecuyer, formerly head-clerk to Maître Solonet, a notary in Bordeaux. That usurer in embryo (who came from Gascony for jobbery) is the proxy of your very honorable mother-in-law, who is the actual holder of your notes for one hundred thousand francs, on which I am told that worthy woman doled out to you only seventy thousand. Compared with Madame Évangélista, papa Gobseck is flannel, velvet, vanilla cream, a sleeping draught. Your vineyard of Belle-Rose is to fall into the clutches of your wife, to whom her mother pays the difference between the price it goes for at the auction sale and the amount of her dower claim upon it. Madame Évangélista will also have the farms at Guadet and Grassol, and the mortgages on your house in Bordeaux already belong to her, in the names of straw men provided by Solonet.

Thus these two excellent women will make for themselves a united income of one hundred and twenty thousand francs a year out of your misfortunes and forced sale of property, added to the revenue of

some thirty-odd thousand on the Grand-livre which these cats already possess.

The endorsement of your wife was not needed; for this morning the said Sieur Lecuyer came to offer me a return of the sum I lent you in exchange for a legal transfer of my rights. The vintage of 1825 which your mother-in-law keeps in the cellars at Lanstrac will suffice to pay me.

These two women have calculated, evidently, that you are now upon the ocean; but I send this letter by courier, so that you may have time to follow the advice I now give you.

I made Lecuyer talk. I disentangled from his lies, his language, and his reticence, the threads I lacked to bring to light the whole plot of the domestic conspiracy hatched against you. This evening, at the Spanish embassy, I shall offer my admiring compliments to your mother-in-law and your wife. I shall pay court to Madame Évangélista; I intend to desert you basely, and say sly things to your discredit, — nothing openly, or that Mascarille in petticoats would detect my purpose. How did you make her such an enemy? That is what I want to know. If you had had the wit to be in love with that woman before you married her daughter, you would to-day be peer of France, Duc de Manerville, and, possibly, ambassador to Madrid.

If you had come to me at the time of your marriage, I would have helped you to analyze and know the women to whom you were binding yourself; out of our mutual observations safety might have been yours. But, instead of that, these women judged me, became

afraid of me, and separated us. If you had not stupidly given in to them and turned me the cold shoulder, they would never have been able to ruin you. Your wife brought on the coldness between us, instigated by her mother, to whom she wrote two letters a week, — a fact to which you paid no attention. I recognized my Paul when I heard that detail.

Within a month I shall be so intimate with your mother-in-law that I shall hear from her the reasons of the hispano-italiano hatred which she feels for you, — for you, one of the best and kindest men on earth! Did she hate you before her daughter fell in love with Félix de Vandenesse; that's a question in my mind. If I had not taken a fancy to go to the East with Montriveau, Ronquerolles, and a few other good fellows of your acquaintance, I should have been in a position to tell you something about that affair, which was beginning just as I left Paris. I saw the first gleams even then of your misfortune. But what gentleman is base enough to open such a subject unless appealed to? Who shall dare to injure a woman, or break that illusive mirror in which his friend delights in gazing at the fairy scenes of a happy marriage? Illusions are the riches of the heart.

Your wife, dear friend, is, I believe I may say, in the fullest acceptation of the word, a fashionable woman. She thinks of nothing but her social success, her dress, her pleasures; she goes to opera and theatre and balls; she rises late and drives to the Bois, dines out, or gives a dinner-party. Such a life seems to me for women very much what war is for

men; the public sees only the victors; it forgets the dead. Many delicate women perish in this conflict; those who come out of it have iron constitutions, consequently no heart, but good stomachs. There lies the reason of the cold insensibility of social life. Fine souls keep themselves reserved, weak and tender natures succumb; the rest are cobblestones which hold the social ocean in its place, water-worn and rounded by the tide, but never worn-out. Your wife has maintained that life with ease; she looks made for it; she is always fresh and beautiful. To my mind the deduction is plain, — she has never loved you; and you have loved her like a madman.

To strike out love from that silicious nature a man of iron was needed. After standing, but without enduring, the shock of Lady Dudley, Félix was the fitting mate to Natalie. There is no great merit in divining that to you she was indifferent. In love with her yourself, you have been incapable of perceiving the cold nature of a young woman whom you have fashioned and trained for a man like Vandenesse. The coldness of your wife, if you perceived it, you set down, with the stupid jurisprudence of married people, to the honor of her reserve and her innocence. Like all husbands, you thought you could keep her virtuous in a society where women whisper from ear to ear that which men are afraid to say.

No, your wife has liked the social benefits she derived from marriage, but the private burdens of it she found rather heavy. Those burdens, that tax was — you! Seeing nothing of all this, you have gone on digging your abysses (to use the hackneyed words of

rhetoric) and covering them with flowers. You have mildly obeyed the law which rules the ruck of men; from which I desired to protect you. Dear fellow! only one thing was wanting to make you as dull as the bourgeois deceived by his wife, who is all astonishment or wrath, and that is that you should talk to me of your sacrifices, your love for Natalie, and chant that psalm: "Ungrateful would she be if she betrayed me; I have done this, I have done that, and more will I do; I will go to the ends of the earth, to the Indies for her sake. I — I —" etc. My dear Paul, have you never lived in Paris, have you never had the honor of belonging by the ties of friendship to Henri de Marsay, that you should be so ignorant of the commonest things, the primitive principles that move the feminine mechanism, the a-b-c of their hearts? Then hear me:—

Suppose you exterminate yourself, suppose you go to Saint-Pélagie for a woman's debts, suppose you kill a score of men, desert a dozen women, serve like Laban, cross the deserts, skirt the galleys, cover yourself with glory, cover yourself with shame, refuse, like Nelson, to fight a battle till you have kissed the shoulder of Lady Hamilton, dash yourself, like Bonaparte, upon the bridge at Arcola, go mad like Roland, risk your life to dance five minutes with a woman — my dear fellow, what have all those things to do with *love*? If love were won by samples such as those mankind would be too happy. A spurt of prowess at the moment of desire would give a man the woman that he wanted. But love, *love*, my good Paul, is a faith like that in the Immaculate conception of the

Holy Virgin; it comes, or it does not come. Will the mines of Potosi, or the shedding of our blood, or the making of our fame serve to waken an involuntary, an inexplicable sentiment? Young men like you, who expect to be loved as the balance of your account, are nothing else than usurers. Our legitimate wives owe us virtue and children, but they don't owe us love.

Love, my dear Paul, is the sense of pleasure given and received, and the certainty of giving and receiving it; love is a desire incessantly moving and growing, incessantly satisfied and insatiable. The day when Vandenesse stirred the cord of a desire in your wife's heart which you had left untouched, all your self-satisfied affection, your gifts, your deeds, your money, ceased to be even memories; one emotion of love in your wife's heart has cast out the treasures of your own passion, which are now nothing better than old iron. Félix has the virtues and the beauties in her eyes, and the simple moral is that blinded by your own love you never made her love you.

Your mother-in-law is on the side of the lover against the husband, — secretly or not; she may have closed her eyes, or she may have opened them; I know not what she has done — but one thing is certain, she is for her daughter, and against you. During the fifteen years that I have observed society, I have never yet seen a mother who, under such circumstances, abandons her daughter. This indulgence seems to be an inheritance transmitted in the female line. What man can blame it? Some copyist of the Civil code, perhaps, who sees formulas only in the place of feelings.

As for your present position, the dissipation into which the life of a fashionable woman cast you, and your own easy nature, possibly your vanity, have opened the way for your wife and her mother to get rid of you by this ruin so skilfully contrived. From all of which you will conclude, my good friend, that the mission you intrusted to me, and which I would all the more faithfully fulfil because it amused me, is, necessarily, null and void. The evil you wish me to prevent is accomplished, — *consummatum est*.

Forgive me, dear friend, if I write to you, as you say, *à la de Marsay* on subjects which must seem to you very serious. Far be it from me to dance upon the grave of a friend, like heirs upon that of a progenitor. But you have written to me that you mean to act the part of a man, and I believe you; I therefore treat you as a man of the world, and not as a lover. For you, this blow ought to be like the brand on the shoulder of a galley-slave, which flings him forever into a life of systematic opposition to society. You are now freed of one evil: marriage possessed you; it now behooves you to turn round and possess marriage.

Paul, I am your friend in the fullest acceptation of the word. If you had a brain in an iron skull, if you had the energy which has come to you too late, I would have proved my friendship by telling you things that would have made you walk upon humanity as upon a carpet. But when I did talk to you guardedly of Parisian civilization, when I told you in the disguise of fiction some of the actual adventures of my youth, you regarded them as mere romance and would

not see their bearing. When I told you that history of a lawyer at the galleys branded for forgery, who committed the crime to give his wife, adored like yours, an income of thirty thousand francs, and whom his wife denounced that she might be rid of him and free to love another man, you exclaimed, and other fools who were supping with us exclaimed against me. Well, my dear Paul, you were that lawyer, less the galleys.

Your friends here are not sparing you. The sister of the two Vandenesses, the Marquise de Listomère and all her set, in which, by the bye, that little Rastignac has enrolled himself, — the scamp will make his way! — Madame d'Aiglemont and her salon, the Lenoncourts, the Comtesse Ferraud, Madame d'Espard, the Nucingens, the Spanish ambassador, in short, all the cliques in society are flinging mud upon you. You are a bad man, a gambler, a dissipated fellow who has squandered his property. After paying your debts a great many times, your wife, an angel of virtue, has just redeemed your notes for one hundred thousand francs, although her property was separate from yours. Luckily, you had done the best you could do by disappearing. If you had stayed here you would have made her bed in the straw; the poor woman would have been the victim of her conjugal devotion!

When a man attains to power, my dear Paul, he has all the virtues of an epitaph; let him fall into poverty, and he has more sins than the Prodigal Son; society at the present moment gives you the vices of a Don Juan. You gambled at the Bourse, you had

licentious tastes which cost you fabulous sums of money to gratify; you paid enormous interests to money-lenders. The two Vandenesses have told everywhere how Gignonnet gave you for six thousand francs an ivory frigate, and made your valet buy it back for three hundred in order to sell it to you again. The incident did really happen to Maxime de Trailles about nine years ago; but it fits your present circumstances so well that Maxime has forever lost the command of his frigate.

In short, I can't tell you one-half that is said; you have supplied a whole encyclopædia of gossip which the women have an interest in swelling. Your wife is having an immense success. Last evening at the opera Madame Firmiani began to repeat to me some of the things that are being said. "Don't talk of that," I replied. "You know nothing of the real truth, you people. Paul has robbed the Bank, cheated the Treasury, murdered Ezzelin and three Medoras in the rue Saint-Denis, and I think, between ourselves, that he is a member of the Dix-Mille. His associate is the famous Jacques Collin, on whom the police have been unable to lay a hand since he escaped from the galleys. Paul gave him a room in his house; you see he is capable of anything; in fact, the two have gone off to India together to rob the Great Mogul." Madame Firmiani, like the distinguished woman that she is, saw that she ought not to convert her beautiful lips into a mouthpiece for false denunciation.

Many persons, when they hear of these tragi-comedies of life, refuse to believe them. They take the side of human nature and fine sentiments; they declare

that these things do not exist. But Talleyrand said a fine thing, my dear fellow: "All things happen." Truly, things happen under our very noses which are more amazing than this domestic plot of yours; but society has an interest in denying them, and in declaring itself calumniated. Often these dramas are played so naturally and with such a varnish of good taste that even I have to rub the lens of my opera-glass to see to the bottom of them. But, I repeat to you, when a man is a friend of mine, when we have received together the baptism of champagne and have knelt together before the altar of the Venus Commodus, when the crooked fingers of play have given us their benediction, if that man finds himself in a false position I'd ruin a score of families to do him justice.

You must be aware from all this that I love you. Have I ever in my life written a letter as long as this? No. Therefore, read with attention what I still have to say.

Alas! Paul, I shall be forced to take to writing, for I am taking to politics. I am going into public life. I intend to have, within five years, the portfolio of a ministry or some embassy. There comes an age when the only mistress a man can serve is his country. I enter the ranks of those who intend to upset not only the ministry, but the whole present system of government. In short, I swim in the waters of a certain prince who is lame of the foot only, — a man whom I regard as a statesman of genius whose name will go down to posterity; a prince as complete in his way as a great artist may be in his.

Several of us, Ronquerolles, Montriveau, the Grand-

lieus, La Roche-Hugon, Sérisy, Féraud, and Granville, have allied ourselves against the "parti-prêtre," as the party-ninny represented by the "Constitutionnel" has ingeniously said. We intend to overturn the Navarreins, Lenoncourts, Vandenesses, and the Grand Almonry. In order to succeed we shall even ally ourselves with Lafayette, the Orleanists, and the Left, — people whom we can throttle on the morrow of victory, for no government in the world is possible with their principles. We are capable of anything for the good of the country — and our own.

Now, then, my dear Paul, instead of setting sail for India you would do a much wiser thing to navigate with me the waters of the Seine. Believe me, Paris is still the place where fortune, abundant fortune, can be won. Potosi is in the rue Vivienne, the rue de la Paix, the Place Vendôme, the rue de Rivoli. In all other places and countries material works and labors, marches and counter-marches, and sweatings of the brow are necessary to the building up of fortune; but in Paris *thought* suffices. Here, every man even mentally mediocre, can see a mine of wealth as he puts on his slippers, or picks his teeth after dinner, in his down-sitting and his up-rising. Find me another place on the globe where a good round stupid idea brings in more money, or is sooner understood than it is here.

If I reach the top of the ladder, as I shall, am I the man to refuse you a helping hand, an influence, a signature? We shall want, we young roués, a faithful friend on whom to count, if only to compromise him and make him a scape-goat, or send him to die

like a common soldier to save his general. Government is impossible without a man of honor at one's side, in whom to confide and with whom we can do and say everything.

Here is what I propose. Let the "Belle-Amélie" sail without you; come back here like a thunderbolt; I'll arrange a duel for you with Vandenesse in which you shall have the first shot, and you can wing him like a pigeon. In France the husband who shoots his rival becomes at once respectable and respected. No one ever cavils at him again. Fear, my dear fellow, is a valuable social element, a means of success for those who lower their eyes before the gaze of no man living. I who care as little to live as to drink a glass of milk, and who have never felt the emotion of fear, I have remarked the strange effects produced by that sentiment upon our modern manners. Some men tremble to lose the enjoyments to which they are attached, others dread to leave a woman. The old adventurous habits of other days when life was flung away like a garment exist no longer. The bravery of a great many men is nothing more than a clever calculation on the fear of their adversary. The Poles are the only men in Europe who fight for the pleasure of fighting; they cultivate the art for the art's sake, and not for speculation.

Now hear me: kill Vandenesse, and your wife trembles, your mother-in-law trembles, the public trembles, and you recover your position, you prove your grand passion for your wife, you subdue society, you subdue your wife, you become a hero. Such is France. As for your embarrassments, I hold a hun-

dred thousand francs for you; you can pay your principal debts, and sell what property you have left with a power of redemption, for you will soon obtain an office which will enable you by degrees to pay off your creditors. Then, as for your wife, once enlightened as to her character you can rule her. When you loved her you had no power to manage her; not loving her, you will have an unconquerable force. I will undertake, myself, to make your mother-in-law as supple as a glove; for you must recover the use of the hundred and fifty thousand francs a year those two women have squeezed out of you.

Therefore, I say, renounce this expatriation which seems to me no better than a pan of charcoal or a pistol to your head. To go away is to justify all calumnies. The gambler who leaves the table to get his money loses it when he returns; we must have our gold in our pockets. Let us now, you and I, be two gamblers on the green baize of politics; between us loans are in order. Therefore take post-horses, come back instantly, and renew the game. You'll win it with Henri de Marsay for your partner, for Henri de Marsay knows how to will, and how to strike.

See how we stand politically. My father is in the British ministry; we shall have close relations with Spain through the Évangélistas, for, as soon as your mother-in-law and I have measured claws she will find there is nothing to gain by fighting the devil. Montriveau is our lieutenant-general; he will certainly be minister of war before long, and his eloquence will give him great ascendancy in the Chamber. Ronquerolles will be minister of State and privy-coun-

cillor; Martial de la Roche-Hugon is minister to Germany and peer of France; Sérisy leads the Council of State, to which he is indispensable; Granville holds the magistracy, to which his sons belong; the Grandlieus stand well at court; Ferraud is the soul of the Gondréville coterie, — low intriguers who are always on the surface of things, I'm sure I don't know why. Thus supported, what have we to fear? The money question is a mere nothing when this great wheel of fortune rolls for us. What is a woman? — you are not a schoolboy. What is life, my dear fellow, if you let a woman be the whole of it? A boat you can't command, without a rudder, but not without a magnet, and tossed by every wind that blows. Pah!

The great secret of social alchemy, my dear Paul, is to get the most we can out of each age of life through which we pass; to have and to hold the buds of our spring, the flowers of our summer, the fruits of our autumn. We amused ourselves once, a few good fellows and I, for a dozen or more years, like mousquetaires, black, red, and gray; we denied ourselves nothing, not even an occasional filibustering here and there. Now we are going to shake down the plums which age and experience have ripened. Be one of us; you shall have your share in the *pudding* we are going to cook.

Come; you will find a friend all yours in the skin of

H. DE MARSAY.

As Paul de Manerville ended the reading of this letter, which fell like the blows of a pickaxe on the

edifice of his hopes, his illusions, and his love, the vessel which bore him from France was beyond the Azores. In the midst of this utter devastation a cold and impotent anger laid hold of him.

“What had I done to them?” he said to himself.

That is the question of fools, of feeble beings, who, seeing nothing, can nothing foresee. Then he cried aloud: “Henri! Henri!” to his loyal friend. Many a man would have gone mad; Paul went to bed and slept that heavy sleep which follows immense disasters, — the sleep that seized Napoleon after Waterloo.

A DOUBLE LIFE.

A DOUBLE LIFE.

TO MADAME LA COMTESSE LOUISE DE TÜRHEIM,
AS A MARK OF REMEMBRANCE AND AFFECTIONATE RESPECT
FROM HER HUMBLE SERVANT,
DE BALZAC.

I.

THE SECOND LIFE.

THE rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, formerly one of the darkest and most tortuous streets of the old quarter of Paris which encircles the Hôtel-de-Ville, wound round the little gardens of the prefecture till it ended in the rue du Martroi at the angle of an old wall, now pulled down. Here could be seen the turnstile to which the street owed its name, a relic of the past that was not destroyed until 1823, when the city of Paris caused to be constructed on the site of a little garden belonging to the Hôtel-de-Ville a splendid ball-room for the fête given to the Duc d'Angoulême on his return from Spain.

The widest part of the rue du Tourniquet was near its junction with the rue de la Tixeranderie, where it was only five feet wide. Consequently, in rainy weather the blackened water of the gutter washed the feet of the old houses, bringing along with it the filth and refuse deposited by each household at the various

posts along the street. The carts for the removal of such rubbish could not enter the narrow way, and the dwellers thereon reckoned upon the storms of heaven to cleanse their ever-muddy street — though it never could be clean. When the summer sun struck vertically down, a line of gold, sharp as the blade of a sabre, illuminated momentarily the darkness of the street, but without drying the perpetual dampness which reigned from the ground-floor to the next floor of these dark and silent houses.

The inhabitants, who lighted their lamps at five o'clock in the month of June, never put them out in winter. Even to-day, if some courageous pedestrian ventures to go from the Marais to the quays by taking, at the end of the rue du Chaune, the several streets named L'Homme Armé, Des Billettes, and Des Deux-Portes, which lead into that of the Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, he will fancy he has been walking through a crypt or cellar.

Nearly all the streets of the old Paris resembled this damp and sombre labyrinth, where antiquaries can still find several historical singularities to admire. For instance, when the house which stood at the corner of the rue du Tourniquet and the rue de la Tixeranderie still existed, observers would have noticed two heavy iron rings built into the wall, a remnant of the chains which the watchman of the quarter put up each night as a measure of public safety.

This house, remarkable for its antiquity, had been built with precautions which fully proved the unhealthiness of these old dwellings; for, in order to sweeten the ground-floor, the walls of the cellar were raised

fully two feet above the level of the soil, which necessitated a rise of three steps in order to enter the house. The door-casing described a semicircular arch, the apex of which was adorned with the carving of a woman's head and sundry arabesques, much injured by time. Three windows, the sills of which were about on a level with a man's head, belonged to a small apartment on the ground-floor looking on the rue du Tourniquet. These windows were protected by strong iron bars placed far apart, ending in a round projection like those of a baker's grating.

If any inquisitive pedestrian had cast his eyes upon the two rooms of this apartment in the daytime, he could have seen nothing within them; a July sun was needed to distinguish in the second room two beds draped with green serge under the panelled ceiling of an old alcove. But in the afternoons, toward three o'clock, when a lamp was lighted, it was possible to see through the window of the first room an old woman sitting on a stool at the corner of a fireplace, where she was, at that hour, stirring something in a chafing-dish which resembled those stews that Parisian portresses know so well how to concoct. A few kitchen utensils hanging on the wall at the end of this room could be seen in the half-light. An old table, standing on three legs and devoid of linen, held knives and forks and pewter plates, and, presently, the dish which the old crone was cooking. Three miserable chairs furnished the room, which served the inhabitants for kitchen and dining-room. Over the fireplace was a fragment of mirror, a tinder-box, three glasses, some sulphur matches, and a large white pot, much cracked.

The tiled floor of the hearth, the utensils, the fireplace, were pleasing to the eye from the evident spirit of neatness and economy which reigned in that cold, dark home.

The pale and wrinkled face of the old woman was in keeping with the gloom of the street and the mouldiness of the building. One might have thought, to see her seated in her chair when doing nothing, that she stuck to the house as a snail to its shell. Her face, in which a vague expression of malice underlay an assumed good-humor, was topped by a flat tulle cap, which scarcely covered her white hair; her large gray eyes were as still as the street, and the many wrinkles on her skin might be compared to the cracks and crevices of the walls. Whether she was born to poverty, or whether she had fallen from some better estate, she now seemed long resigned to her melancholy existence. From sunrise till evening, except while preparing the meals, or, basket in hand, she went out for provisions, this old creature spent her time in the adjoining room, before the third window and opposite to a young girl.

At all hours of the day this young girl, sitting in an old arm-chair covered with red velvet, her head bent down over an embroidery-frame, worked industriously. Her mother had a green tambour-frame on her lap and seemed to be making tulle; but her fingers moved the bobbins stiffly, and her sight was evidently failing, for her nose, of three-score years and over, bore a pair of those old-fashioned spectacles which hold to the tips of the nostrils according to the force with which they are pinched on. At night, these two laborious creatures

placed a lamp between them; the light of which, falling through two glass globes filled with water, threw a strong ray upon their work, which enabled the old woman to see the looser strands of the bobbins of her tambour, and the young girl the more delicate parts of the pattern she was embroidering.

The curve of the iron bars had enabled the girl to put on the sill of the window a long wooden box filled with earth; in which were vegetating sweet-peas, nasturtiums, a sickly honeysuckle, and a few convolvuli whose weakly tendrils were clinging to the bars. These etiolated plants produced a few pale flowers; another feature strangely in keeping, which mingled I scarcely know what of sweetness and of sadness in the picture, framed by the window, of those toiling figures. A mere glance at that interior would have given the most self-absorbed pedestrian a perfect image of the life led by the work-women of Paris; for it was evident that the girl lived solely by her needle. Many persons reaching the turnstile had wondered how any young creature living in that noisome place could have kept the bright colors of youth. The lively imagination of a student on his way to the "pays latin" might have compared this dark and vegetative life to that of ivy draping a cold stone-wall, or to that of peasants born to toil, who labor and die ignored by the world they have contributed to feed. A man of property said to himself as he looked at the house with the eye of an owner: —

"What would become of those two women if embroidery should go out of fashion?"

Among the persons whose duty took them at fixed

hours through this narrow way, either to the Hôtel de Ville or to the Palais, some might perhaps have been found, whose interest in the sight would take a more selfish view of it; some widower, perhaps, or some elderly Adonis might have thought that the evident distress of the mother and daughter would make the innocent work-girl a cheap and easy bargain. Or perhaps some worthy clerk with a salary of twelve hundred francs a year, the daily witness of the girl's industrious ardor, might have reckoned from that the purity of her life and have dreamed of uniting one obscure life to another obscure life, one plodding toil to another as laborious, — bringing at any rate the arm of a man to sustain existence, and a peaceful love, colorless as the flowers in the window.

Such vague hopes did at times brighten the dull gray eyes of the old mother. In the morning, after their humble breakfast, she would take her tambour-frame (more for appearances, it would seem, than for actual work, because she laid down her spectacles on the table beside her) and proceeded to watch from half-past eight to about ten o'clock all the habitual passers through the street at that hour. She noted their glances; made observations on their demeanor, their dress, their countenances; she seemed to bargain with them for her daughter, so eagerly did her keen eyes seek to open communications, by manœuvres like those behind the scenes of a theatre. To her this morning review was indeed a play; perhaps it was her only pleasure.

The daughter seldom raised her head: modesty, or perhaps the painful sense of poverty, kept her eyes

closely fixed upon her work; so that sometimes, in order to make her show her face to a passer in the street, her mother would give a cry of surprise. A clerk with a new overcoat, or an habitual passer appearing with a woman on his arm might then have beheld the slightly turned-up nose of the little work-girl, her rosy mouth, and her gray eyes, sparkling with life in spite of her crushing toil. Those wakeful, laborious nights were only shown by the more or less white circle beneath the eyes on the fresh, pure skin above the cheek-bones. The poor young thing seemed born for love and gayety, — for love, which had painted above her rounded eyelids two perfect arches, and had given her such a forest of chestnut hair that she might have hidden her whole person under its impenetrable veil; for gayety, which moved her expressive nostrils, and made two dimples in her glowing cheeks, — for gayety, that flower of hope, which gave her strength to look without faltering at the barren path of life before her.

The beautiful hair of the girl was always carefully arranged. Like all other work-women of Paris, she thought her toilet complete when she had braided and smoothed her hair and had twirled into circles the two little locks on either side of the temples, the effect of which was to set off the whiteness of her skin. The way her hair grew upon her head was so full of grace, the bistre line clearly defined upon her neck gave so charming an idea of her youth and its attractions, that an observer beholding her as she bent over her work, not raising her head at any noise, would have put down such apparent unconsciousness to coquetry.

"Caroline, there 's a new regular man! none of the old ones compare with him."

These words, said in a low voice by the mother one morning in the month of August, 1815, conquered, apparently, the indifference of the girl, for she looked into the street; but the new man was nearly out of sight.

"Which way did he go?" she asked.

"He 'll be back, no doubt, about four o'clock. I shall see him coming and I 'll kick your foot. I 'm certain he 'll come back, for it is now three days since he took to coming through the street. But he is n't regular as to time. The first day he came at six, next day it was four, yesterday five. I am sure I have seen him at some time or other, elsewhere. I dare say he 's a clerk at the prefecture who has gone to live in the Marais — Oh, look here!" she added, after glancing into the street, "our monsieur with the brown coat has taken to a wig! Heavens! how it does change him!"

The monsieur with the brown coat must have been the last of the *habitués* who formed the daily procession, for the old mother now put on her spectacles, resumed her work with a sigh, and looked at her daughter with so singular an expression that Lavater himself would have been puzzled to analyze it, — admiration, gratitude, a sort of hope for better things, mingled with the pride of possessing so pretty a daughter.

That evening, about four o'clock, the old woman pushed the girl's foot, and Caroline raised her head in time to see the new actor whose periodical passing

was now to enliven the scene of their lives. Tall, thin, pale, and dressed in black, the man, who was about forty years old, had something solemn in his gait and demeanor. When his tawny, piercing eye met the curious glance of the old woman, it made her tremble; and she fancied he had the gift, or the habit, of reading hearts. Certainly his first aspect was chilling as the air itself of that gloomy street.

Was the cadaverous, discolored complexion of that haggard face the result of excessive toil, or the product of enfeebled health? This problem was solved by the old mother in a score of different ways. But the next day, Caroline divined at once that the wrinkled brow bore signs of long-continued mental suffering. The slightly hollowed cheeks of the stranger bore an imprint of that seal with which misfortune marks its vassals, as if to leave them the consolation of recognizing one another with fraternal eye, and uniting together to resist it.

The warmth of the weather happened at this moment to be so great, and the stranger was so absent-minded, that he omitted to put on his hat while passing through the unhealthy street. Caroline then noticed the stern aspect given to the face by the cut of the hair, which stood up from his forehead like a brush. Though the girl's eyes were first brightened by innocent curiosity, they took a tender expression of sympathy and pity as the stranger passed on, like the last mourner in a funeral procession.

The strong, but not pleasing, impression felt by Caroline at the sight of this man resembled none of the sensations which the other habitual passers had

conveyed to her. For the first time in her life her compassion was aroused for another than her mother and herself. She made no reply to the fanciful conjectures which furnished food for the irritating loquacity of the old woman, but silently drew her long needle above and below the tulle in her frame; she regretted that she had not seen more of the unknown man, and waited until the morrow to make up her mind more decisively about him. For the first time, too, a passer beneath the window had suggested reflections to her mind. Usually she replied with a quiet smile to the various suppositions of her mother, who was always in hopes of finding a protector for her child among these strangers. If such ideas, imprudently expressed, awoke no evil thoughts in the girl's mind, we must attribute Caroline's indifference to the cruelly hard work which consumed the forces of her precious youth. and must infallibly change ere long the limpid light of her eyes and ravish from those fair cheeks the tender color which still brightened them.

For two whole months the "black monsieur" — such was the name they gave him — passed through the street almost daily, but capriciously as to time. The old woman often saw him at night when he had not passed in the morning; also he never returned at the fixed hours of other employees, who served as clocks to Madame Crochard, and never, since the first day when his glance had inspired the old mother with a sort of terror, had his eyes appeared to take notice of the picturesque group of the two female gnomes, — an indifference which piqued Madame Crochard who was not pleased to see her "black monsieur" gravely pre-

occupied, walking with his eyes on the ground or looking straight in front of him, as if he were trying to read the future in the damp mists of the rue du Tourniquet.

However, one morning toward the last of September, the pretty head of Caroline Crochard stood out so brilliantly on the dark background of her dingy chamber, and she looked so fresh among her spindling flowers and the sparse foliage that twined about the bars of the window, — the scene, in short, presented so many contrasts of light and shade, of white and rose, blending so well with the muslin the girl was embroidering and the tones of the old velvet chair in which she sat, — that the unknown pedestrian did look attentively at the effects of this living picture. Madame Crochard, weary of the indifference of her black gentleman, had, in truth, taken the step of making such a clatter with her reels and bobbins that the gloomy, thoughtful stranger was perhaps compelled by this unusual noise to look up at the window.

He exchanged one glance with Caroline, rapid, it is true, but in it their souls came slightly in contact, and they each were conscious of a presentiment that they should think of one another. That evening when the stranger returned, about four o'clock, Caroline distinguished the sound of his step upon the pavement, and when they looked at each other they did so with a species of premeditation; the eyes of the stranger were brightened with an expression of benevolence, and he smiled, while Caroline blushed. The old mother watched them both with a satisfied air.

After that memorable morning the black monsieur passed through the rue du Tourniquet twice every day, with a few exceptions which the two women noted; they judged, from the irregularity of his hours of return that he was neither so quickly released nor so strictly punctual as a subaltern clerk would be.

During the first three winter months Caroline and the stranger saw each other twice a day for the length of time which it took him to walk the distance flanked by the door and the three windows of the house. Daily this brief interview took on more and more a character of benevolent intimacy, until it ended in something that was almost fraternal. Caroline and the stranger seemed from the first to understand each other; and then, by dint of examining one another's faces a deeper knowledge of their characters came about. The meeting became a sort of visit which the stranger paid to Caroline; if, by chance, her black monsieur passed without giving her the half-formed smile on his eloquent lips or the friendly glance of his brown eyes, something was lacking to her day. She was like those old men to whom the reading of their newspaper becomes such a pleasure that if some accident delays it they are wholly upset at missing the printed sheet which helps them for an instant to cheat the void of their dreary existence.

These fugitive meetings soon had, both to Caroline and to the unknown man, the interest and charm of familiar conversation between friends. The young girl could no more conceal from the intelligent eye of her silent friend an anxiety, an illness, a sad thought, than he could hide from her the presence in

his mind of some painful preoccupation. "Something troubled him yesterday," was a thought that often came into the girl's heart as she noticed a strained look on the face of her black gentleman. "Oh! he must have been working too hard!" was another exclamation caused by other signs and shadows that Caroline had learned to distinguish.

The stranger, on his side, seemed to know when the girl had spent her Sunday in finishing a lace dress, in the design of which he felt an interest. He saw how the pretty face darkened as the rent-day came round; he knew when Caroline had been sitting up all night; but more especially did he notice how the sad thoughts now beginning to tarnish the freshness and the gayety of that young face were dissipated little by little as their unspoken acquaintance increased.

When winter dried the foliage and the tendrils of the puny garden, and the window was closed, a smile that was softly malicious came to the stranger's lips as he saw the bright light in the room casting Caroline's reflection through the panes. An evident parsimony as to fire, and the reddened noses of the two women, revealed to him the indigence of the little household; but if a pained compassion was reflected in his eyes, Caroline proudly undermined it with a feigned gayety.

But all this while the sentiments that were budding in their hearts were buried there, and no event happened to teach them the strength or the extent of their own feelings; they did not even know the sound of each other's voices. These two mute friends avoided a closer union as though it were an evil. Each seemed

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to fear to bring upon the other a heavier misfortune than those they each were bearing. Was it the reticence of friendship that thus restrained them, or that dread of selfishness, that atrocious distrust which puts a barrier between all persons collected within the walls of a crowded city? Did the secret voice of their consciences warn them of coming peril? It is wholly impossible to explain the feeling which kept them enemies even more than friends, seemingly as indifferent to each other as they were, in truth, attached; as much united by instinct as they were parted by fact. Perhaps each was desirous of keeping both his and her illusion. It almost seemed as though this nameless black gentleman feared to hear from those fresh lips, pure as a flower, some vulgar speech, and that Caroline felt herself unworthy of that mysterious being who bore to her eyes the unmistakable signs of power and fortune.

As for Madame Crochard, that observant mother, half angry at her daughter's indecision, began to show a sulky face to her black monsieur, on whom she had hitherto smiled with an air as complacent as it was servile. Never did she bemoan herself to her daughter so bitterly at the hard fate which obliged her, at her age, to cook; never did her rheumatism and her catarrh draw from her so many moans. Her state of mind was such that she failed to do, that winter, the number of yards of tulle on which the poor household counted.

Under these circumstances and toward the end of December, when bread was becoming dearer and the poor were already feeling that rise in the cost of

*“He crouched before the window to listen to the
mother and daughter.”*



London City

London City - Old St. Paul's Church

C. G. G. G.

grains which made the year 1816 so cruel to poverty, the unknown man observed on the face of the girl, whose name was unknown to him, the traces of some painful thought which her friendly smiles were unable to chase away. He recognized also in her eyes the weary indications of nocturnal labor. On one of the last nights of the month he returned, contrary to custom, through the rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean about one in the morning. The stillness of the hour enabled him to hear, even before he reached the house, the whining voice of the old woman, and the still more distressing tones of the girl, the sound of which mingled with the hissing sound of a fall of snow.

He walked slowly; then, at the risk of being arrested, he crouched before the window to listen to the mother and daughter, examining them through one of the many holes in the muslin curtains. A legal paper lay on the table which stood between their two work-frames, on which were the lamp and the globes of water. He recognized at once a summons of some kind. Madame Crochard was weeping bitterly, and the voice of the girl was guttural with her grief, completely changing its soft and caressing ring.

"Why make yourself so unhappy, mother? Monsieur Moulineux will never sell our furniture, and he cannot turn us out before I have finished this gown. Two nights more and I shall carry it to Madame Roguin."

"And she'll make you wait for the money, as usual. Besides, the price of that gown won't pay the baker, too."

The spectator of this scene had so great a habit of

reading faces that he thought he saw as much hypocrisy in the mother's grief as there was truth in the daughter's. He disappeared at once; but presently returned. Again he looked through the ragged muslin. The mother had gone to bed. The girl was bending over her frame with indefatigable energy. On the table beside the summons lay a small piece of bread cut in a triangle; meant, no doubt to support her during the night, perhaps to sustain her courage. The black gentleman shuddered with pity and with pain; he flung his purse through a hole in the window that was covered with paper, in such a way that it fell at the girl's feet. Then, without waiting to see her surprise, he escaped, his heart beating, his cheeks on fire.

The next day the sad and alien man passed by as usual, affecting a preoccupied air. But he was not allowed to escape the girl's gratitude. Caroline had opened the window and was digging about the box of earth with a knife, a pretext of ingenuous falsity which proved to her benefactor that on this occasion she was determined not to see him through glass. With eyes full of tears she made a sign with her head as if to say, "I can only pay you with my heart."

But the black gentleman seemed not to understand the expression of this true gratitude. That evening, when he passed again, Caroline was busy in pasting another paper over the broken window and so was able to smile to him, showing the enamel of her brilliant teeth, like, as it were, a promise. From that day the black gentleman took another road, and appeared no more in the rue du Tourniquet.

During the first week of the following May, on a Saturday morning, as Caroline was watering her honeysuckle, she beheld between the two black lines of houses a narrow strip of cloudless sky, and called to her mother in the next room : —

“Mamma! let us go to-morrow for a day’s pleasuring at Montmorency!”

The words had scarcely left her lips when the black monsieur passed, sadder and evidently more oppressed than ever. The look of pleasure which Caroline gave him might have passed for an invitation. In fact, the next day, when Madame Crochard, arrayed in a reddish-brown merino pelisse, a silk bonnet, and a striped shawl made to imitate cashmere, went with her daughter to choose a *coucou* at the corner of the rue d’Enghien and the rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis, she found her black monsieur standing there, with the air of a man who was waiting for a woman.

A smile of pleasure softened the face of the stranger when he beheld Caroline, whose little feet, shod in puce-colored prunella boots, appeared beneath her white muslin gown, which, blown by the wind (too often perfidious to ill-made forms), showed off her beautiful figure, while her face, shaded by a straw hat lined with pink, seemed illuminated by a ray from heaven. A broad belt, also puce-colored, set off a little waist he might have spanned between his fingers; her hair, parted into two brown bandeaus round a forehead white as milk, gave her an air of simple purity which nothing marred. Pleasure seemed to make her as light as the straw of her hat; but a hope darted into her mind on seeing the black gentleman,

eclipsing all else. He himself appeared irresolute. Perhaps the sudden revelation of joy on the girl's face caused by his presence may have decided him, for he turned and hired a cabriolet, with a fairly good horse, to go to Saint-Leu-Taverny; then he asked Madame Crochard and her daughter to take seats in it.

The mother accepted without further urging; but no sooner had the vehicle fairly started than she brought forth scruples and regrets for the inconvenience that two women would cause to their companion.

"Perhaps monsieur would rather go alone to Saint-Leu?" she said hypocritically.

Presently she complained of the heat, and especially of her troublesome catarrh, which, she said, had kept her awake all night, and the carriage had hardly reached Saint-Denis before she was asleep, though certain of her snores seemed doubtful to the black monsieur, who frowned heavily and looked at the old woman with singular suspicion.

"Oh! she's asleep," said Caroline, naïvely. "She coughed all night, and must be tired."

For all answer, the gentleman cast a shrewd smile upon the girl which seemed to mean:—

"Innocent creature! you don't know your mother."

However, in spite of his distrust, by the time the cabriolet was rolling along the avenue of poplars which leads to Eau Bonne, the black gentleman believed that Madame Crochard was really asleep; perhaps, however, he no longer cared to know whether the sleep was real or feigned. Whether it was that the beauty of the skies, the pure country air, and those delicious scents wafted by the budding poplars, the

willow catkins, the blossoms of the eglantine, had inclined his heart to open and expand; or that further silence became irksome to him; or that the sparkling eyes of the young girl were answering his, — it is certain that the black monsieur now began a conversation, as vague as the quivering of the foliage to the breeze, as vagabond as the circlings of a butterfly, as little without real motive as the voice, softly melodious, of the fields, but marked, like Nature herself, with mysterious love.

At this season the country quivers like a bride who has just put on her bridal robes; it invites to pleasure the coldest heart. To leave the darksome streets of the Marais for the first time since the previous autumn, and to find one's self suddenly in the bosom of that harmonious and picturesque valley of Montmorency; to pass through it in the morning when the eye can follow the infinity of its horizons, and to turn from that to an infinity of love in the eyes beside us, — what heart will continue icy, what lips will keep their secrets?

The unknown man found Caroline more gay than clever, more loving than informed. But if her laugh was a trifle giddy, her words bore evidence of true feeling; and when to the leading questions of her companion she replied with that effusion of the heart which the lower classes lavish, when they feel it, without the reticence of persons of good society, the face of the black gentleman brightened, and seemed, as it were, reborn; it lost by degrees the sadness that contracted its features, and gradually, tint by tint, it gained a look of youth and a character of beauty

which made the young girl proud and happy. She divined instinctively that her friend, deprived of tenderness and love, no longer believed in the devotion of women. At last a sudden gush of Caroline's light chatter carried off the last cloud which veiled on the stranger's face his real youth and his native character; he seemed to come to some eternal divorce from oppressive ideas, and he now displayed a vivacity of heart which the solemnity of his face had hitherto concealed. The talk became insensibly so familiar that by the time the carriage stopped at the first houses of the village of Saint-Leu Caroline was calling her friend "Monsieur Roger." Then, for the first time, Madame Crochard woke up.

"Caroline, she must have heard us," said Roger, suspiciously, in the young girl's ear.

Caroline answered by a charming smile of incredulity, which dispersed the dark cloud brought by the fear of a scheme to the forehead of the distrustful man. Without expressing any surprise, Madame Crochard approved of everything, and followed her daughter and Monsieur Roger to the park of Saint-Leu, where the pair had agreed to ramble about the smiling meadows and the balmy groves which the taste of Queen Hortense had rendered celebrated.

"Heavens! how lovely!" cried Caroline, when, having reached the green brow of the hill where the forest of Montmorency begins, she saw at her feet the vast valley winding its serpentine way dotted with villages, steeples, fields, and meadows, a murmur of which came softly to her ear like the purling of waves, as her eyes rested on the blue horizon of the distant hills.

The three excursionists followed the banks of an artificial river until they reached the Swiss valley with its chalet where Napoleon and Queen Hortense were wont to stay. When Caroline had seated herself with sacred respect upon the mossy wooden bench where kings and princesses and the Emperor had reposed themselves, Madame Crochard manifested a desire to take a closer view of a suspension bridge between two cliffs a little farther on. Wending her way to that rural curiosity she left her daughter to the care of Monsieur Roger, remarking, however, that she should not go out of sight.

“Poor little thing!” cried Roger, “have you never known comfort or luxury? Don’t you sometimes wish to wear the pretty gowns you embroider?”

“I should n’t be telling the truth, Monsieur Roger, if I said I never thought of the happiness rich people must enjoy. Yes, I do think often, specially when asleep, of the pleasure it would be to see my poor mother saved the trouble of going out to buy our food and then preparing it at her age. I would like to have a charwoman come in the morning before she is out of bed, and make her a cup of coffee with plenty of sugar, white sugar, in it. She likes to read novels, poor dear woman! Well, I’d rather she used her eyes on her favorite reading than strain them counting bobbins from morning till night. Also, she really needs a little good wine. I do wish I could see her happy, she is so kind.”

“Then she has always been kind to you?”

“Oh, yes!” said the girl, in an earnest voice.

As they watched Madame Crochard, who had reached

the middle of the bridge, and now shook her finger at them, Caroline continued:—

“Oh, yes! she has always been kind to me. What care she gave me when I was little! She sold her last forks and spoons to apprentice me to the old maid who taught me to embroider. And my poor father! she took such pains to make him happy in his last days!”

At this remembrance the girl shuddered, and put her hands before her eyes.

“Bah! don’t let us think of past troubles,” she resumed, gayly.

Then she colored, perceiving that Roger was much affected, but she dared not look at him.

“What did your father do?” asked Roger.

“He was a dancer at the Opera before the Revolution,” she replied, with the simplest air in the world, “and my mother sang in the chorus. My father, who managed the evolutions on the stage, chanced to be present at the taking of the Bastille. He was recognized by some of the assailants, who asked him if he couldn’t lead a real attack as he had led so many sham ones at the theatre. Father was brave, and he agreed; he led the insurgents, and was rewarded with the rank of captain in the army of the Sambre-et-Meuse, where he behaved in such a way that he was rapidly promoted and became a colonel. But he was terribly wounded at Lutzen, and returned to Paris to die, after a year’s illness. The Bourbons came back, and of course my mother could not get a pension, and we fell into such dreadful poverty that we had to work for our living. Of late the poor dear woman has been

ailing; and she is n't as resigned as she used to be; she complains, and I don't wonder, — she, who once had all the comforts of an easy life. As for me, I can't regret comforts I never had; but there's one thing I do hope Heaven will grant me."

"What is that?" asked Roger, who seemed dreamy.

"That ladies will always wear embroidered gowns, so that I shall never want work."

The frankness of these avowals interested her hearer so much that when Madame Crochard slowly returned to them, he looked at her with an eye that was less hostile.

"Well, my children, have you had a good talk?" she asked, in a tone both indulgent and sly. "When one thinks, Monsieur Roger, that 'the little corporal' sat on that bench where you are sitting!" she continued, after a moment's silence. "Poor man! how my husband loved him! Ah! it is a good thing Crochard died; he never could have borne to think of him at that place where *those others* have put him."

Roger laid a finger on his lips, and the old woman, nodding her head, said, gravely: —

"Enough; I'll keep a dead tongue in my head and my lips tight. But," she added, opening the front of her dress, and showing the cross of the Legion of honor and its red ribbon fastened to her throat with a black bow, "nothing can prevent me from wearing what *he* gave to my poor Crochard; I mean to be buried with it."

Hearing these words, which at that time were held to be seditious, Roger interrupted the old woman by rising abruptly, and they started to return to the vil-

lage through the park. The young man absented himself for a few moments to order a meal at the best restaurant, then he returned to fetch the two women, guiding them along the paths through the forest.

The dinner was gay. Roger was no longer that gloomy shadow which for months had passed through the rue du Tourniquet; no longer the "black monsieur," but rather a hopeful young man ready to let himself float upon the current of life like the two women who were happy in the day's enjoyment, though the morrow might find them without food. He seemed, indeed, to be under the influence of the joys of youth; his smile had something caressing and childlike about it. When, at five o'clock, the pleasant dinner came to an end with a few glasses of champagne, Roger was the first to propose that they should go to the village ball, under the chestnut-trees, where he and Caroline danced together. Their hands met in one thought, their hearts beat with the same hope, and beneath that azure sky, glowing toward the west with the level rays of the setting sun, their glances had a brilliancy which, to each other's heart, paled even that of the heaven above them. Strange power of a thought and a desire! nothing seemed impossible to these two beings. In such magic moments, when pleasure casts its reflections on the future, the soul can see naught but happiness. This charming day had created for both of them memories to which they could compare no other experience of their lives. Is the spring more perfect than the current, the desire more ravishing than its fulfilment? is the thing hoped-for more attractive than the thing possessed?

“There’s our day already over!”

At this exclamation which escaped the young man when the dance ended, Caroline looked at him compassionately, for she saw the sadness beginning again to cloud his face.

“Why are you not as happy in Paris as you have been here?” she said. “Is there no happiness except at Saint-Leu? It seems to me I can never again be discontented anywhere.”

Roger quivered at those words, dictated by the soft abandonment which often leads women farther than they mean to go, — just as, on the other hand, prudery makes them stiffer than they really are. For the first time since that look which began their intimacy, Caroline and Roger had one and the same thought. Though they did not express it, they each felt it by a mutual impression something like that of the warmth of a glowing hearth beneficently comforting in winter. Then, as if they feared their silence, they hastened to the place where their vehicle awaited them. But before they reached it they took each other by the hand and ran along a wood-path in advance of Madame Crochard. When the white of the old woman’s tulle cap was no longer visible through the foliage, Roger turned to the girl and said, with a troubled voice and a beating heart: —

“Caroline?”

The girl, confused, stepped back a few paces, understanding the desires that interrogation implied; nevertheless she held out her hand, which was ardently kissed, though she quickly withdrew it, for at that moment her mother came in sight. Madame Crochard

pretended to have seen nothing, as if, remembering her stage experience, the scene was only an aside.

The history of Roger and Caroline does not continue in the rue du Tourniquet; to meet them again we must go to the very centre of modern Paris, where, among the newly built houses, there are found apartments which seem expressly made for the honeymoon of bridal couples. The paper and painting are as fresh as they; the decoration, like their love, is in its bloom; all is in harmony with young ideas and bounding desires. About the middle of the rue Taitbout, in a house where the copings were still white, the columns of the vestibule and the door unsoiled, the walls shining with that coquettish paint which our renewed relations with England brought into fashion, was a little apartment on the second floor, arranged by an architect as if he had foreseen the uses to which it would be put. A simple airy antechamber with a stucco wainscot gave entrance to a salon and a very small dining-room. The salon communicated with a pretty bedchamber, beyond which was a bathroom. The mantels were adorned with mirrors choicely framed. The doors were painted with arabesques in excellent taste, and the style of the cornices was pure. An amateur would have recognized, better there than elsewhere, that science of arrangement and decoration which distinguishes the work of our modern architects.

For the last month Caroline had occupied this pretty apartment, which was furnished by upholsterers under direction of the architect. A short description of the principal room will give an idea of the marvels this

apartment presented to Caroline's eyes when Roger brought her there.

Hangings of gray cloth enlivened by green silk trimmings covered the walls of the bedroom. The furniture, upholstered with pale-green cassimere, was of that light and graceful shape then coming into fashion. A bureau of native wood inlaid with some darker wood held the treasures of the trousseau; a secretary of the same, a bed with antique drapery, curtains of gray silk with green fringes, a bronze clock representing Cupid crowning Psyche, and a carpet with gothic designs on a reddish ground were the principal features of this place of delight. Opposite to a *psyche* mirror stood a charming toilet-table, in front of which sat the ex-embroidery girl, very impatient with the scientific labor of Plaisir, the famous coiffeur, who was dressing her hair.

"Do you expect to get it done to-day?" she was saying.

"Madame's hair is so long and thick," responded Plaisir.

Caroline could not help smiling. The flattery of the artistic hair-dresser reminded her, no doubt, of the passionate admiration expressed by her friend for the beautiful hair he idolized. When Plaisir had departed, Caroline's maid came to hold counsel with her mistress as to which dress was most likely to please Roger. It was then the beginning of September, 1816; a dress of green grenadine trimmed with chinchilla was finally chosen.

As soon as her toilet was over Caroline darted into the salon, opened a window looking upon the street,

and went out upon the elegant little balcony which adorned the façade of the house; there she folded her arms on the railing in a charming attitude, not taken to excite the admiration of the passers who frequently turned to look at her, but to fix her eyes on the boulevard at the end of the rue Taitbout. This glimpse, which might be compared to the hole in a stage-curtain through which the actors see the audience, enabled her to watch the multitude of elegant carriages and the crowds of people carried past that one spot like the rapid slide of a magic lantern. Uncertain whether Roger would come on foot or in a carriage, the former lodger in the rue du Tourniquet examined in turn the pedestrians and the tilburys, a light style of phaeton recently brought to France by the English. Expressions of love and mutinous provocation crossed her face when, after watching for half an hour, neither heart nor sight had shown her the person for whom she waited. What contempt, what indifference was on her pretty face for all the other beings who were hurrying along like ants beneath her! Her gray eyes, sparkling with mischief, were dazzling. Wholly absorbed in her passion, she avoided the admiration of others with as much care as some women take to obtain it; and she troubled herself not at all as to whether a remembrance of her white figure leaning on the balcony should or should not disappear on the morrow from the minds of the passers who were now admiring her; she saw but one form, and she had in her head but one idea.

When the dappled head of a certain horse turned from the boulevard into the street, Caroline quivered and stood on tiptoe, trying to recognize the white

reins and the color of the tilbury. Yes, it was he! Roger, as he turned the corner, looked toward the balcony and whipped his horse and soon reached the bronze door, with which the animal was now as familiar as its master. The door of the apartment was opened by the maid, who had heard her mistress's cry of pleasure. Roger rushed into the salon, took Caroline in his arms, and kissed her with that effusion of feeling which accompanies the rare meetings of two creatures who love each other. Then they sat down together on a sofa before the fire, and silently looked at one another, — expressing their happiness only by the close grasp of their hands, and communicating their thoughts through their eyes.

"Yes, it is he!" she said at last. "Yes, it is you! Do you know that it is three whole days since I last saw you? — an age! But what is the matter? I know you have some trouble on your mind."

"My poor Caroline — "

"Oh, nonsense! poor Caroline — "

"Don't laugh, my angel; we can't go to-night to the Feydeau."

Caroline made a face of discontent, which faded instantly.

"How silly of me! why should I care about the theatre when I have you here. To see you! is n't that the only play I care for?" she cried, passing her hand through his hair.

"I am obliged to dine with the attorney-general. We have a most troublesome affair on hand. He met me in the great hall of the Palais; and as I open the case, he asked me to dinner that we might talk it

over previously. But, my darling, you can take your mother to the Feydeau and I'll join you there, if the conference ends early."

"Go to the theatre without you!" she cried, with an expression of astonishment; "enjoy a pleasure you can't share! Oh, Roger, you don't deserve to be kissed," she added, throwing her arm round his neck with a motion as naïve as it was seductive.

"Caroline, I must go now, for I have to dress, and it takes so long to reach the Marais; besides, I have business that must be finished before dinner."

"Monsieur," said Caroline, "take care what you say! My mother assures me that when men begin to talk to us of business that means they no longer love us."

"But, Caroline, I did come as I promised; I snatched this hour from my pitiless —"

"Oh, hush!" she said, putting her finger on his lips; "hush! don't you see that I was joking?"

At this moment Roger's eye lighted on an article of furniture brought that morning by the upholsterer, — the old rosewood embroidery-frame the product of which supported Caroline and her mother when they lived in the rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, — which had just been "done-up" like new, and on it a very beautiful tulle dress was already stretched.

"Yes, look at it, dear friend! I shall work to-night; and while I work I shall be thinking of those first days and weeks and months when you passed me without a word — but not without a look! those days when the memory of a look kept me awake at night. Oh! my dear frame, the handsomest bit of furniture

in the room, though you did not give it to me. Ah! you don't know!" she continued, seating herself on Roger's knee. "Listen! I want to give to the poor all I can now earn by embroidery. You have made me so rich, I want for nothing. How I love that dear property of Bellefeuille! less for what it is, however, than because you gave it to me. But tell me, Roger; I should like to call myself Caroline de Bellefeuille; can I? you ought to know. Is it legal or allowable?"

Seeing the little nod of affirmation to which Roger was led by his hatred for the name of Crochard, Caroline danced lightly about the room, clapping her hands together.

"It seems to me," she cried, "that I shall belong to you more in that way. Generally a girl gives up her own name and takes that of her husband."

An importunate idea, which she drove away instantly, made her blush. She took Roger by the hand and led him to the piano.

"Listen," she said. "I know my sonata now like an angel."

So saying, her fingers ran over the ivory keys, but a strong arm caught her round the waist and lifted her.

"Caroline, I ought to be far away by this time."

• "You must go? Well, go, then," she said, pouting.

But she smiled as she looked at the clock, and cried out, joyously: —

"At any rate, I have kept you a quarter of an hour more."

"Adieu, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille," he said, with the gentle mockery of love.

She took a kiss and led him to the door. When the

sound of his steps was no longer to be heard on the staircase she ran to the balcony to see him get into his tilbury, pick up the reins, and send her a last look. Then she listened to the roll of the wheels along the street, and followed with her eyes the mettlesome horse, the hat of the master, the gold lace on the groom's livery, and even looked long at the corner of the street which parted her from that vision of her heart.

Five years after the installation of Mademoiselle Caroline de Bellefeuille in the pretty apartment in the rue Taitbout, another domestic scene was happening there which tightened still further the bonds of affection between the two beings who loved each other.

In the middle of the blue salon and in front of the window that opened on the balcony, a little boy about four and a half years old was making an infernal racket by whipping and urging his rocking-horse, which was going at a pace that did not please him. The curls of his pretty blond head were falling in disorder on his collarette, and he smiled like an angel at his mother when she called to him from her sofa:

"Not so much noise, Charles; you'll wake your little sister."

At that the inquiring boy jumped hastily from his horse and came on tiptoe, as if he feared to make a sound on the carpet; then, with a finger between his little teeth, he stood in one of those infantine attitudes which have so much grace because they are natural, and gently lifted the white muslin veil that hid the rosy face of a baby asleep on its mother's knee.

"Is she really asleep?" he said, much surprised. "Why does Eugénie sleep when we are all awake?" he inquired, opening wide his great black eyes which floated in liquid light.

"God only knows that," replied Caroline, smiling.

Mother and son gazed at the little girl baptized that morning. Caroline, now about twenty-four years old, had developed a beauty which happiness unalloyed and constant pleasure had brought into bloom. In her, the woman was now complete. Happy in obeying all the wishes of her dear Roger, she had by degrees acquired the accomplishments in which she was formerly lacking. She could play quite well on the piano, and sang agreeably. Ignorant of the usages of society (which would have repulsed her, and where she would not have gone had it even desired her, for a happy woman does not seek the world), she had not learned how to assume the social elegance of manner nor how to maintain the conversation teeming with words and empty of thought which passes current in the world. But, on the other hand, she had laboriously obtained the knowledge and the accomplishments necessary to a mother whose ambition lies in bringing up her children properly.

Never to part from her son; to give him from his cradle those lessons of every hour which imprint upon the youthful soul a love of goodness and of beauty, to preserve him from all evil influences, to fulfil the wearisome functions of a nurse and the tender obligations of a mother, — such were her pleasures. From the very first day of her love the discreet and gentle creature resigned herself so thoroughly to make no

step beyond the enchanted sphere in which she found her joys, that after six years of the tenderest union she knew her friend only by the name of Roger. In her bedroom an engraving of Psyche coming with her lamp to look at Cupid, though forbidden by the god to do so, reminded her of the conditions of her happiness.

During these six years no ill-placed ambition on her part wearied Roger's heart, a treasure-house of kindness. Never did she wish for display, for diamonds, for toilets; she refused the luxury of a carriage offered a score of times to her vanity. To watch on the balcony for Roger's cabriolet, to go with him to the theatre, to ramble with him in fine weather in the country about Paris, to hope for him, to see him, to hope for him again, — that was the story of her life, poor in events, rich in affection.

While rocking to sleep with a song the baby, a girl, born a few months before the day of which we speak, she pleased herself by evoking her memories of the past. The period she liked best to dwell on was the month of September in every year, when Roger took her to Bellefeuille to enjoy the country at that season. Nature is then as prodigal of fruit as of flowers; the evenings are warm, the mornings soft, and the sparkle of summer still keeps at bay the melancholy ghost of autumn.

During the first period of their love Caroline attributed the calm equability of soul and the gentleness of which Roger gave her so many proofs to the rarity of their meetings, always longed for, and to their manner of life, which did not keep them perpetually in each other's presence, as with husband and wife. She

recalled with delight how, during their first stay on the beautiful little property in the Gâtinais, tormented by a vague fear, she watched him. Useless espial of love! Each of those joyful months passed like a dream in the bosom of a happiness that proved unchangeable. She had never seen that kind and tender being without a smile on his lips, — a smile that seemed the echo of her own. Sometimes these pictures too vividly evoked brought tears to her eyes; she fancied she did not love him enough, and was tempted to see in her equivocal situation a sort of tax levied by fate upon her love.

At other times an invincible curiosity led her to wonder for the millionth time what events they were which could have driven so loving a man as Roger to find his happiness in ways that were clandestine and illegal. She invented a score of romances, chiefly to escape admitting the real reason, long since divined, though her heart refused to believe in it.

She now rose, still holding her sleeping child in her arms, and went into the dining-room to superintend the arrangements of the table for dinner. The day was the 6th of May, 1822, the anniversary of their excursion to the park of Saint-Leu, when her life was decided; during every succeeding year that day had been kept as a festival of the heart. Caroline now selected the linen and ordered the arrangement of the dessert. Having thus taken the pains which she knew would please Roger, she laid the baby in its pretty cradle and took up her station on the balcony to watch for the useful cabriolet which had now replaced the elegant tilbury of former years.

After receiving the first onset of Caroline's caresses and those of the lively urchin who called him "papa," Roger went to the cradle, looked at his sleeping daughter, kissed her forehead, and drew from his pocket a long paper, covered with black lines.

"Caroline," he said, "here's the dowry of Mademoiselle Eugénie de Bellefeuille."

The mother took the paper (a certificate of investment on the Grand-livre) gratefully.

"Why three thousand francs a year to Eugénie, when you only gave fifteen hundred a year to Charles?" she asked.

"Charles, my angel, will be a man," he answered. "Fifteen hundred francs will suffice to support him. With that income a man of energy is above want. If, by chance, your son should be a nullity, I do not wish to give him enough to make him dissipated. If he has ambition, that small amount of property will inspire him with a love of work, and it will also enable him to work. Eugénie is a woman, and must be provided for."

The father began to play with Charles, whose lively demonstrations were proofs of the independence and liberty in which he was being educated. No fear between child and father destroyed that charm which compensates paternity for its heavy responsibilities; the gayety of the little family was as sweet as it was genuine. That evening a magic lantern was produced which cast upon a white sheet mysterious scenes and pictures to the great amazement of the boy. More than once the raptures of the innocent little fellow excited the wild laughter of his father and mother.

Later, when the child had gone to bed, the baby woke, demanding its legitimate nourishment. By the light of the lamp, beside the hearth, in that chamber of peace and pleasure, Roger abandoned himself to the happiness of contemplating the picture of Caroline with her infant at her breast, white and fresh as a lily when it blooms, her beautiful brown hair falling in such masses of curls as almost to hide her throat. The light, as it fell, brought out the charms of this young mother, — multiplying upon her and about her, on her clothes and on her infant, those picturesque effects which are produced by combinations of light and shade. The face of the calm and silent woman seemed sweeter than ever before to Roger, who looked with tender eyes at the red and curving lips from which no bitter or discordant word had ever issued. The same love shone in Caroline's own eyes as she examined Roger furtively, either to enjoy the effect she was producing, or to know if she might keep him that evening.

Roger, who saw that meaning in her glance, said, with feigned regret: —

“I must soon be going. I have important business to attend to; they expect me at home. Duty first; is n't that so, my darling?”

Caroline watched him with a sad and gentle look, which did not leave him ignorant of the pain of her sacrifice.

“Adieu, then,” she said. “Go now! If you stay an hour longer perhaps I shall not then be able to let you go.”

“My angel,” he said, smiling, “I have three days’

leave of absence, and I am supposed to be at this moment twenty leagues from Paris."

A few days after this anniversary of the 6th of May, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille was hurrying one morning to the rue Saint-Louis in the Marais, hoping not to arrive too late at a house where she usually went regularly once a week. A messenger had been sent to tell her that her mother, Madame Crochard, was dying from a complication of ills brought on by catarrh and rheumatism.

While Caroline was still on the way, certain scrupulous old women with whom Madame Crochard had made friends for the last few years, introduced a priest into the clean and comfortable apartment of the old mother on the second floor of the house. Madame Crochard's servant was ignorant that the pretty young lady with whom her mistress often dined was the old woman's daughter. She was the first to propose calling in a confessor, hoping, secretly, that the priest would be of as much use to her as to the sick woman.

Between two games of cards, or while walking together in the Jardin Turc, the old women with whom Madame Crochard gossiped daily had contrived to instil into the hardened heart of their friend certain scruples as to her past life, a few ideas of the future, a few fears on the subject of hell, and certain hopes of pardon based on a sincere return to the duties of religion. Consequently, during this solemn morning three old dames from the rue Saint-François and the rue Vieille-du-Temple established themselves in the salon where Madame Crochard was in the habit of receiving them every Tuesday. They each took turns

to keep the poor old creature company and give her those false hopes with which the sick are usually deluded.

It was not until the crisis seemed approaching and the doctor, called in the night before, refused to answer for the patient's life, that the three old women consulted one another to decide if it were necessary to notify *Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille*. *Françoise*, the maid, was finally instructed to send a messenger to the rue Taitbout to inform the young relation whose influence was feared by the four old women, each of whom devoutly hoped that the man might return too late with the person on whom *Madame Crochard* had seemed to set a great affection. The latter, rich to their minds, and spending at least three thousand francs a year, was courted and cared for by the female trio solely because none of these good friends, nor even *Françoise* herself, knew of her having any heirs. The opulence in which her young relation *Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille* lived (*Madame Crochard* refrained from calling *Caroline* her daughter, according to a well-known custom of the Opera of her day) seemed to justify their scheme of sharing the property of the dying woman among themselves.

Presently one of the three crones, who was watching the patient, put her shaking head into the room where the other two were waiting, and said: —

“It is time to send for the *Abbé Fontanon*. In two hours from now she will be unconscious, and could n't sign her name.”

Old *Françoise* departed immediately, and soon returned with a man in a black coat. A narrow fore-

head bespoke a narrow mind in this priest, whose face was of the commonest, — his heavy, hanging cheeks, his double chin, showing plainly enough a comfort-loving egotist. His powdered hair gave him a speciously mild appearance until he raised his small brown eyes, which were very prominent, and would have been in their proper place beneath the brows of a Kalmuc Tartar.

“Monsieur l’abbé,” Françoise was saying to him, “I thank you for your advice, but you must please to remember the care I have taken of this dear woman — ”

Here she suddenly paused, observing that the door of the apartment was open and that the most insinuating of the three crones was standing on the landing to be the first to speak with the confessor.

When the ecclesiastic had graciously received the triple broadside of the three pious and devoted friends of the widow he went into the latter’s chamber and sat down by her bedside. Decency and a certain sense of propriety forced the three ladies and old Françoise to remain in the adjoining room, where they assumed looks of grief and mourning, which none but wrinkled old faces like theirs can mimic to perfection.

“Ah! but have n’t I been unlucky?” cried Françoise, with a sigh. “This is the fourth mistress I’ve had the grief to bury. The first left me an annuity of a hundred francs, the second a hundred and fifty, the third a sum down of three thousand. After thirty years’ service that’s all I’ve got!”

The servant presently used her right of going and

coming to slip into a little closet where she could overhear the priest's words.

"I see with pleasure," said Fontanon, "that your feelings, my daughter, are those of true piety. You are wearing, I see, some holy relic."

Madame Crochard made a vague movement which showed perhaps that she was not wholly in her right mind, for she dragged out the imperial cross of the Legion of honor.

The abbé rolled back his chair on beholding the effigy of the emperor. But he soon drew closer to his penitent, who talked to him in so low a voice that for a time Françoise could hear nothing.

"A curse upon me!" cried the old woman suddenly, in a louder voice. "Don't abandon me, monsieur l'abbé. Do you really think I shall have to answer for my daughter's soul?"

The priest spoke in so low a voice that Françoise could not hear him through the partition.

"Alas!" cried the widow, shrilly, "the wretch has given me nothing that I can will to any one. When he took my poor Caroline, he separated her from me, and gave me only three thousand francs a year, the capital of which is to go to my daughter."

"Madame has a daughter, and only an annuity!" cried Françoise, hastening into the salon.

The three old women looked at each other in amazement. The one whose chin and nose were nearest together (thus revealing a certain superior hypocrisy and shrewdness) winked at the other two, and as soon as Françoise had turned her back she made them a sign which meant, 'She's a sly one; she has got herself down on three wills already.'

The three old women remained therefore where they were. But the abbé presently joined them, and after they had heard what he had to say, they hurried like witches down the stairs and out of the house, leaving Françoise alone with her mistress.

Madame Crochard, whose sufferings were increasing cruelly, rang in vain for her maid, who was busy in making a search among the old woman's receptacles, and contented herself by calling out from time to time: —

“Yes, yes! I'm coming! — presently!”

The doors of the closets and wardrobes were heard to open and shut, as if Françoise were looking for some lottery-ticket or bank-note hidden among their contents. At this moment, when the crisis was impending, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille arrived.

“Oh! my dear mother,” she cried, “how criminal I am not to have got here sooner! You suffer, and I did not know it! my heart never told me you were in pain! But here I am now —”

“Caroline.”

“Yes.”

“They brought me a priest.”

“A doctor is what you want,” cried Caroline. “Françoise, fetch a doctor. How could those ladies neglect to have a doctor?”

“They brought me a priest,” reiterated Madame Crochard, with a sigh.

“How she suffers! and not a thing to give her; no quieting medicine, nothing!”

The mother made an indistinct sign; but Caroline's intelligent eye saw what was meant; she was instantly silent herself that her mother might speak.

"They brought me a priest," said the old woman for the third time, "on pretence of confessing me. Beware for yourself, Caroline," she cried out painfully, making a last effort; "the priest dragged out of me the name of your protector."

"How did you know it, my poor mother?" The old woman died while striving to look satirically at her daughter. If Caroline had observed her mother's face at that moment she would have seen what no one will ever see, namely, — Death laughing.

To understand the secrets underlying this introduction to our present Scene, we must for a time forget these personages and turn back to the story of anterior events. The conclusion of that story will be seen to be connected with the death of Madame Crochard. These two parts will then form one history, which, by a law peculiar to Parisian life, had produced two distinct and separate lines of action.

II.

THE FIRST LIFE.

TOWARD the close of November, 1805, a young lawyer, then about twenty-six years of age, was coming down the grand staircase of the mansion occupied by the arch-chancellor of the Empire, about three in the morning. When he reached the court-yard in his evening dress and saw a thin coating of ice, he gave an exclamation of dismay, through which, however, shone that sense of amusement which seldom deserts a Frenchman. Looking about him he saw no hackney-coaches, and heard in the distance none of those familiar sounds produced by the wooden shoes of Parisian coachmen and their gruff voices. The trampling of a few horses were heard in the court-yard, among them those of the chief-justice, whom the young man had just seen playing cards with Cambacérès. Suddenly he felt the friendly clap of a hand upon his shoulder; looking round, he beheld the chief-justice and bowed to him.

As the footman was letting down the steps of his carriage, the former legislator of the Convention had observed the young man's predicament.

"All cats are gray at night," he said, gayly. "The chief-justice won't compromise himself if he does take a barrister to his lodgings. Especially," he

added, "if the said barrister is the nephew of an old colleague, and one of the lights of that great Council of State which gave the Code Napoléon to France."

The young man got into the carriage, obeying an imperative sign from the chief law officer of imperial justice.

"Where do you live?" asked the minister, while the footman awaited the order before he closed the door.

"Quai des Augustins, monseigneur."

The horses started, and the young lawyer found himself *tête à tête* with the minister, whom he had vainly endeavored to speak with both during and after the sumptuous dinner of Cambacérès; it was evident to his mind that the chief-justice had taken pains to avoid him during the whole evening.

"Well, Monsieur de Granville, it seems to me that you are on the right road now —"

"So long as I am seated by your Excellency —"

"I'm not joking," said the minister. "You were called to the bar two years ago, and since then your defence in the Simeuse and the Hauteserre trials have placed you very high."

"I have thought, until now, that my devotion to those unfortunate *émigrés* did me an injury."

"You are very young," said the minister, gravely. "But," he added, after a pause, "you pleased the arch-chancellor to-night. Enter the magistracy of the bar; we back the right men there. The nephew of a man for whom Cambacérès and I feel the deepest interest ought not to remain a mere pleader for want of influence. Your uncle helped us to come safely through a stormy period, and such services must not be forgotten."

The minister was silent for a moment. "Before long," he resumed, "I shall have three places vacant, in the Lower court and in the Imperial court of Paris; come and see me then, and choose the one that suits you. Until then, work hard; but do not come to my court. In the first place, I am overrun with work; and in the next, your rivals will guess your intentions and try to injure you. Cambacérès and I, by saying not one word to you to-night, were protecting you from the dangers of favoritism."

As the minister ended these words the carriage drew up on the Quai des Augustins. The young barrister thanked his generous protector with effusive warmth of heart, and rapped loudly on the door, for the keen north wind blew about his calves with wintry rigor. Presently an old porter drew the cord, and, as the young man entered, he called to him in a wheezy voice:—

"Monsieur, here's a letter for you."

The young man took it, and tried, in spite of the cold, to read the writing by the paling gleam of a street-lamp.

"It is from my father!" he exclaimed, taking his candlestick from the porter. He then ran rapidly up to his room and read the following letter:—

"Take the mail coach, and, if you get here promptly, your fortune is made. Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems has lost her sister; she is now the only child, and we know that she does not hate you. Madame Bontems will probably leave her forty thousand francs a year in addition to her dowry. I have prepared your

way. Our friends may be surprised to see a noble family like ours ally itself with the Bontems. It is true that old Bontems was a *bonnet rouge* of the deepest dye, who got possession of a vast amount of the national property for almost nothing. But in the first place, what he got was the property of monks who will never return, and in the next, inasmuch as you have already derogated from our station in making yourself a barrister, I don't see why we should shrink from making another concession to modern ideas. The girl will have three hundred thousand francs, and I will give you one hundred thousand; your mother's property is worth a hundred and fifty thousand more, or nearly that. Therefore, my dear son, if you are willing to enter the magistracy, I see you in a fair way to become a senator like the rest of them. My brother-in-law, the councillor of State, will not lend a hand for that, I know, but as he is not married, his property will be yours some day. In reaching that position you perch high enough to watch events.

“Adieu; I embrace you.”

Young de Granville went to bed with his head full of projects, each one more delightful than the last. Powerfully protected by Cambacérès, the chief-justice, and his maternal uncle, who was one of the constructors of the Code, he was about to begin his career in an enviable position before the leading court of France and a member of that bar from which Napoleon was selecting the highest functionaries of his empire. And now, in addition to these prospects, came that of a

fortune sufficiently brilliant to enable him to sustain his rank, to which the puny revenue of five thousand francs which he derived from an estate left him by his mother would not have sufficed.

To complete his dreams of ambition came those of personal happiness; he evoked the naïve face of Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems, the companion of his childish plays. So long as he remained a mere child his father and mother had not opposed his intimacy with the pretty daughter of their country neighbor; but when, during his short visits to Bayeux at the time of his college vacations, his parents, bigoted aristocrats, noticed his affection for the young girl, they forbade him to think of her. For ten years past young Granville had seldom seen his former companion, whom he called his "little wife." On the few occasions when the young pair had managed to evade the watchfulness of their families, they had scarcely done more than exchange a few words as they passed in the street or sat near each other in church. Their fortunate days were those when they met at some rural fête, called in Normandy an "assembly," when they were able to watch each other furtively. During his last vacation, Granville had seen Angélique twice; and the lowered eyes and dejected look of his "little wife" made him think she was oppressed by some secret despotism.

The morning after receiving his father's letter, the young lawyer appeared at the coach office in the rue Notre-Dame des Victoires, by seven o'clock, and was lucky enough to get a seat in the diligence then starting for Caen.

It was not without deep emotion that the new barrister beheld the towers of the cathedral of Bayeux. No hope of his life had yet been disappointed; his heart was opening to all the noblest sentiments which stir the youthful mind. After an over-long banquet of welcome with his father and a few old friends, the impatient young man was taken to a certain house in the rue Teinture, already well-known to him. His heart beat violently as his father—who was still called in Bayeux the Comte de Granville—rapped loudly at a porte-cochère, the green paint of which was peeling off in scales.

It was four in the afternoon. A young servant-girl, wearing a cotton cap, saluted the gentlemen with a bob courtesy, and replied that the ladies were at vespers, but would soon be home. The count and his son were shown into a lower room which served as a salon and looked like the parlor of a convent. Panels of polished walnut darkened the room, around which a few chairs covered with tapestry were symmetrically placed. The sole ornament of the stone chimney-piece was a green-hued mirror, from either side of which projected the twisted arms of those old-fashioned candelabra made at the time of the Peace of Utrecht. On the panelled wall opposite to the fireplace young Granville saw an enormous crucifix of ebony and ivory weathed with consecrated box.

Though lighted by three windows, which looked upon a provincial garden of symmetrical square beds outlined with box, the room was so dark that it was difficult to distinguish on the wall opposite to the windows three church pictures, the work of some learned artist,

and bought, during the Revolution no doubt, by old Bontems, who, in his capacity as head of the district, did not forget his own interests.

From the carefully waxed floor to the curtains of green checked linen everything shone with monastic cleanliness. The heart of the young man was chilled involuntarily by this silent retreat in which Angélique lived. His recent experience of the brilliant salons of Paris in the vortex of continual fêtes had easily effaced from his mind the dull and placid life of the provinces; the contrast was now so abruptly presented that he was conscious of a species of inward repugnance. To come from a reception at Cambacérés, where life was so ample, where intellects had breadth and compass, where the imperial glory was so vividly reflected, and to fall suddenly into a circle of mean ideas was like being transported from Italy to Greenland.

"To live here! why, it is not living," he said inwardly, as he looked round this salon of methodism.

The old count, who noted the surprise on his son's face, took his arm and led him to a window where there was still a little light, and while the woman lit the yellowed candles above the chimney-piece, he endeavored to disperse the clouds that this aspect of dulness gathered on the young man's brow.

"Listen, my boy," he said. "The widow of old Bontems is desperately pious, — when the devil gets old, you know! I see that the odor of sanctity is too much for you. Well, now, here's the truth. The old woman is besieged by priests; they have persuaded her that she has still time to go straight to heaven;

and so, to make sure of Saint Peter and his keys, she buys them. She goes to mass every day, takes the sacrament every Sunday that God creates, and amuses herself by restoring chapels. She has given the cathedral so many ornaments, albs, and copes, she has bedizened the canopy with such loads of feathers that the last procession of the Fête-Dieu brought a greater crowd than a hanging, merely to see the priests so gorgeously dressed and all their utensils regilt. This house, my boy, is holy ground. But I've managed to persuade the foolish old thing not to give those pictures you see there to the church; one is a Domenichino, the other two, Correggio and Andrea del Sarto, — worth a great deal of money."

"But Angélique?" asked the young man, eagerly.

"If you don't marry her Angélique is lost," replied the count. "Our good apostles keep advising her to be a virgin and martyr. I've had a world of trouble to rouse her little heart by talking of you, — ever since she became an only child. But can't you see that, once married, you'll take her to Paris, and once there fêtes, and marriage, and the theatre and the excitements of Parisian life will soon make her forget the confessionals and fasts, hair-shirts and masses on which these creatures feed?"

"But won't the fifty thousand francs a year derived from ecclesiastical property be given back?"

"Ah! there's the rub," cried the count, with a knowing look. "In consideration of this marriage — for Madame Bontems' vanity is not a little tickled at the idea of grafting the Bontems on the genealogical tree of the Granvilles — the said mother gives her

fortune outright to her daughter, reserving to herself only a life-interest in it. Of course the clergy oppose the marriage; but I have had the banns published; all is ready; in a week you'll be out of the claws of the old woman and her abbés. You'll get the prettiest girl in Bayeux, — a little duck who'll never give you any trouble, for she has principles. She has been mortified in the flesh, as they say in their jargon, by fasts and prayers, and," he added, in a low voice, "by her mother."

A rap discreetly given to the door silenced the count, who expected to see the two ladies enter. A young servant-lad with an air of important business entered, but, intimidated by the sight of two strangers, he made a sign to the woman, who went up to him. The lad wore a blue jacket with short tails which flapped about his hips, and blue and white striped trousers; his hair was cut round, and his face was that of a choir-boy, so expressive was it of that forced compunction which all the members of a *dévôte* household acquire.

"Mademoiselle Gatienne, do you know where the books for the Office of the Virgin are? The ladies of the congregation of the Sacré-Cœur are to make a procession this evening in the church."

Gatienne went to fetch the books.

"Will it take long, my little friar?" asked the count.

"Oh! not more than half an hour."

"Suppose we go and see it; lots of pretty women," said the father to the son. "Besides, a visit to the cathedral won't do us any harm "

The young lawyer followed his father with an irresolute air.

"What's the matter with you?" asked the count.

"Well, the fact is, father, that I—I—I think I am right."

"But you have n't yet said anything."

"True; but I have been thinking that having saved a part of your former fortune you will leave it to me some day, and a long day hence I hope. Now if you are willing to give me, as you say, a hundred thousand francs to make this marriage, which may be a foolish one, I'd rather take fifty thousand to escape unhappiness and stay a bachelor. Even so I shall have a fortune equal to that which Mademoiselle Bontems will bring me."

"Are you crazy?"

"No, father. Here is what I mean. The chief-justice promised me two days ago an appointment at the Paris bar. Fifty thousand francs joined to what I now possess, together with the salary of the place, will give me an income of twelve thousand francs; and I should undoubtedly have opportunities of fortune far preferable to those of a marriage which may prove as poor in happiness as it is rich in means."

"I see plainly," said his father, laughing, "that you never lived under the *ancien régime*. Did we of that day ever trouble ourselves about our wives, I'd like to know?"

"But, father, marriage has become in our day—"

"*Ah ça!*" said the count, interrupting his son, "then all is true that my old friends of the emigration used to tell me? Has the Revolution bequeathed us

nothing but life without gayety, infecting the youth of France with equivocal principles? Are you going to talk to me, like my brother-in-law the Jacobin, of the Nation, and public morality, and disinterestedness? Good heavens! without the Emperor's sisters what would become of us?"

The old man, still vigorous, whom the peasants on his property continued to call the Seigneur de Granville, concluded these words as they entered the cathedral. Disregarding the sanctity of the place, he hummed an air from the opera of "Rose et Colas" while taking the holy water; then he led his son along the lateral aisles, stopping at each column to examine the rows of heads, lined up like those of soldiers on parade.

The special office of the Sacré-Cœur was about to begin. The ladies belonging to that society had gathered near the choir; the count and his son moved on to that part of the nave and stood leaning against a column in the darkest corner, whence they could see the entire mass of heads, which bore some resemblance to a meadow studded with flowers.

Suddenly, within a few feet of young Granville, the sweetest voice he could conceive a human being to possess rose like the song of the first nightingale after a dreary winter. Though accompanied by other women's voices and the tones of the organ, that voice stirred his nerves as if they had been suddenly assailed by the too rich, too keen notes of an harmonica. The Parisian turned round and saw a young girl whose face, from the bowed attitude of the head, was completely hidden in a large bonnet of some white material. He

felt it was from her that this clear melody proceeded; he fancied that he recognized Angélique in spite of the brown pelisse which wrapped her figure, and he nudged his father's arm.

"Yes, that's she," said the count, after looking in the direction his son had pointed out.

The old gentleman showed by a gesture the pale face of an elderly woman whose eyes, encircled by dark lines, had already taken note of the strangers, though her deceitful glance seemed never to have left her prayer-book.

Angélique raised her head toward the altar, as if to inhale the penetrating perfume of the incense, clouds of which were floating near the women. By the mysterious gleams cast from the tapers, the lamp of the nave, and a few wax-candles fastened to the columns, the young man saw a sight which shook his resolutions. A white silk bonnet framed a face of charming regularity, ending the oval by a bow of satin ribbon beneath the dimpled chin. Above a narrow but delicate forehead the pale gold hair was parted into bands which came down upon her cheeks like the shadow of foliage on a bunch of flowers. The arches of the eyebrows were drawn with the precision so much admired on beautiful Chinese faces. The nose, almost aquiline, possessed an unusual firmness of outline, and the lips were like two rosy lines traced by love's most delicate implement. The eyes, of a pale, clear blue, were expressive of purity.

Though Granville remarked a sort of rigid silence upon this charming face, he could readily assign it to the feelings of devotion that were then in the girl's

soul. The sacred words of the prayer passed from those rosy lips in a cloud, as it were, of perfume, which the cold of the church sent visibly into the atmosphere. Involuntarily, the young man bent forward to breathe that divine exhalation. The movement attracted the girl's attention, and her eyes, hitherto fixed on the altar, turned toward Granville. The dim light showed him to her indistinctly, but she recognized the companion of her childhood; a memory more powerful than prayer brought a vivid brilliancy to her face, and she blushed. The young man quivered with joy as the emotions of another life were visibly vanquished by emotions of love, and the solemnity of the sanctuary seemed eclipsed by earthly memories. But his triumph was soon over. Angélique lowered her veil, recovered a calm countenance, and began once more to sing without a thrill in her voice that showed the least emotion. But Granville found himself under the thralldom of a new desire, and all his ideas of prudence vanished.

By the time the service was over his impatience had become so great that without allowing the ladies to return home he went up at once to greet his "little wife." A recognition that was shy on both sides took place in the porch of the cathedral under the eyes of the faithful. Madame Bontems trembled with pride as she took the arm which the Comte de Granville, much provoked by his son's scarcely decent impatience, was forced to offer her before the eyes of all present.

During the fifteen days that now elapsed between the official presentation of the young Vicomte de Granville as the accepted suitor of Mademoiselle Angélique

Bontems and the solemn day of the marriage, the young man came assiduously to visit his love in the gloomy parlor, to which he grew accustomed. These long-visits were partly made for the purpose of watching Angélique's nature; for Granville's prudence revived on the day after that first interview. He always found his future wife seated before a little table of Santa Lucia wood, employed in marking the linen of her trousseau. Angélique never spoke first of religion. If the young lawyer began to play with the beads of the handsome rosary which lay beside her in a crimson velvet bag, if he smiled as he looked at a relic which always accompanied that instrument of devotion, Angélique would take the chaplet gently from his hands, giving him a supplicating look; then, without a word, she replaced it in its bag and locked them up. If, occasionally (to test her), Granville risked some objecting remark against certain practices of religion, the pretty creature would listen to him with the settled smile of fixed conviction on her lips.

"We must either believe nothing, or believe all that the Church teaches," she replied. "Would you wish a girl without religion for the mother of your children? No. What man would dare to judge between God and the unbelievers? Can I blame what the Church enjoins?"

Angélique seemed so inspired by fervent charity, Granville saw her turn such penetrating and beseeching glances on him, that he was several times tempted to embrace her religion. The profound conviction she felt of walking in the true and only path awoke in the

heart of the future magistrate certain doubts of which she endeavored to make the most.

Granville then committed the enormous fault of mistaking the signs of an eager desire for those of love. Angélique was so pleased to unite the voice of her heart with that of her duty, in yielding to an inclination she had felt from childhood, that the young man, misled, did not distinguish which of the two voices was the stronger. Are not all young men primarily disposed to trust the promises of a pretty face, and to infer beauty of soul from beauty of feature? An indefinable feeling leads them to believe that moral perfection must coincide with physical perfection. If her religion had not permitted Angélique to yield to her feelings they would soon have dried up in her heart like a plant watered with an acid. Could a lover beloved become aware of the secret fanaticism of the girl's nature?

Such was the history of young Granville's feelings during this fortnight, devoured like a book whose dénouement is absorbing. Angélique, attentively studied, seemed to him the gentlest of womankind, and he even found himself giving thanks to Madame Bontems, who, by inculcating the principles of religion so strongly in her daughter, had trained her, as it were, to meet the trials of life.

On the day appointed for the signing of the marriage contract Madame Bontems made her son-in-law swear solemnly to respect the religious practices of her daughter, to allow her absolute liberty of conscience, to let her take the sacrament and go to church and to confession as often as she pleased, and never

to oppose her in her choice of a confessor. At this solemn moment Angélique looked at her future husband with so pure and innocent an air that Granville did not hesitate to take the required oath. A smile flickered on the lips of the Abbé Fontanon, the pallid priest who directed the consciences of the family. With a slight motion of her head, Mademoiselle Bontems promised her lover never to make an ill use of that liberty of conscience. As for the old count, he whistled under his breath, to the tune of "Va-t-en voir s'ils viennent."

After the proper number of days granted to the *retours de nocces*, customary in the provinces, Granville returned with his wife to Paris, where the young lawyer was now appointed as substitute to perform the duties of attorney-general to the imperial court of the Seine. When the new couple began to look about them for a residence, Angélique employed the influence possessed by every woman during the honeymoon to induce Granville to take a large apartment on the ground-floor of a house which formed the corner of the rue Vieille-du-Temple and the rue Neuve-Saint-François. The principal reason for her choice was the fact that this house was close to the rue d'Orléans, in which was a church, and it was also near a small chapel in the rue Saint-Louis.

"A good housekeeper makes proper provision," said her husband, laughing.

Angélique begged him to observe that the Marais quarter was in the neighborhood of the Palais de Justice, and that the magistrates he had just called upon lived there. A large garden gave, for a young house-

hold, an additional value to the residence, — their children, “if heaven sent them any,” could play there; the court-yard was spacious, and the stables were fine. Granville would much have preferred a house in the Chaussée-d’Antin, where everything was young and lively, where the fashions appear in all their novelty, where the neighboring population is elegant, and the distance less to theatres and other sources of amusement. But he found himself forced to yield to the persuasions of a young wife making her first request, and thus, solely to please her, he buried himself in the Marais.

Granville’s new functions required an assiduous labor, all the more because they were new to him; he therefore gave his first thought to the furnishing of his study and the arrangement of his library, where he quickly installed himself in the midst of a mass of documents, leaving his young wife to direct the decoration of the rest of the house. He threw the responsibility of these purchases, usually a source of pleasure and tender recollection to young wives, the more willingly upon Angélique because he was ashamed of depriving her of his presence far more than the rules of the honeymoon permitted. But after he had thoroughly settled to his work, the young official allowed his wife to entice him out of his study and show him the effect of the furniture and decorations, which so far he had only seen piecemeal.

If it is true, as the adage says, that we may judge of a woman by the door of her house, the rooms of that house must reveal her mind with even more fidelity. Whether it was that Madame de Granville

had given her custom to tradesmen without any taste, or that her own nature was inscribed on the quantity of things ordered by her, certain it is that the young husband was astonished at the dreariness and cold solemnity that reigned in the new home. He saw nothing graceful; all was discord; no pleasure was granted to the eye. The spirit of formality and pettiness which characterized the parlor at Bayeux reappeared in the Parisian salon beneath ceilings and cornices decorated with commonplace arabesques, the long convoluted strands of which were in execrable taste.

With the desire to exonerate his wife, the young man retraced his steps and examined once more the long and lofty antechamber through which the apartment was entered. The color of the woodwork, chosen by his wife, was much too sombre; the dark-green velvet that covered the benches only added to the dullness of the room, — of no great importance, to be sure, except as it gave an idea of the rest of the house; just as we often judge of a man's mind by his first words. An antechamber is a species of preface which announces all, but pledges nothing. The young man asked himself if his wife could really have chosen the lamp in the form of an antique lantern which hung in the middle of this barren hall, that was paved with black and white marble and hung with a paper imitating blocks of stone with here and there green patches of simulated moss and lichen. A large but old barometer hung in the centre of one of the panels as if to make the barrenness of the place more visible.

The husband looked at his wife; he saw her so

satisfied with the red trimmings that edged the cotton curtains, so pleased with the barometer and the decent statue which adorned the top of a huge gothic stove, that he had not the barbarous courage to destroy those fond illusions. Instead of condemning his wife, Granville condemned himself; he blamed his neglect of his first duty, which was surely to guide the steps of a girl brought up in Bayeux and ignorant of Paris.

After this specimen, the reader can easily imagine the decoration of the other rooms. What could be expected of a young woman who took fright at the legs of a caryatide, and rejected with disgust a candelabrum or a bit of furniture if the nudity of an Egyptian torso appeared upon it. At this period the school of David had reached the apex of its fame; everything in France felt the influence of the correctness of his drawing and his love for antique forms, which made his painting, as one might say, a species of colored sculpture. But none of the inventions of imperial luxury obtained a place in Madame de Granville's home. The vast square salon retained the white paint and the faded gilding of the Louis XV. period, in which the architects were prodigal of those insufferable festoons due to the sterile fecundity of the designers of that epoch. If the slightest harmony had reigned, if the articles of furniture had taken, in modern mahogany, the twisted forms brought into fashion by the corrupted taste of Boucher, Angélique's house would merely have offered the odd contrast of young people living in the nineteenth century as if they belonged to the eighteenth; but no, — a mass of heterogeneous things produced the most ridiculous

anachronisms. The consoles, clocks, and candelabra represented warriors and their attributes, which the triumphs of the Empire had rendered dear to Paris. Greek helmets, Roman broad-swords, shields due to military enthusiasm which now decorated the most pacific articles of furniture were little in accordance with the delicate and prolix arabesques, the delight of Madame de Pompadour. Pietistic devotion carries with it a sort of wearisome humility, which does not exclude pride. Whether from modesty or natural inclination, Madame de Granville seemed to have a horror for light or gay colors. Perhaps she thought that brown and purple comported best with the dignity of a magistrate. How could a young girl accustomed to an austere life conceive of those luxurious sofas, those elegant and treacherous boudoirs where pleasures and dangers take their rise?

The poor magistrate was in despair. By the tone of approbation with which he echoed the praises which his wife was bestowing upon herself she perceived that she had not pleased him; and she showed such grief at her failure that the amorous Granville saw another proof of love for him in her excessive pain, instead of seeing what it really was, — a wound to her self-love. A young girl suddenly taken from the mediocrity of provincial ideas, unaccustomed to the coquetry and elegance of Parisian life, could she have done better? The young husband preferred to believe that the choice of his wife had been guided by her tradesmen, rather than admit to himself what was really the truth. Less loving, he would have felt that the dealers, quick to divine the thoughts of their customers, must have

blessed heaven for sending them a young *dévote* devoid of taste, who enabled them to get rid of things that were otherwise unsalable. As it was, he did his best to console his wife.

"Happiness, my dear Angélique, does n't depend on furniture that is more or less elegant; it depends on the sweetness and kindness and love of a woman."

"It is my duty to love you; and no duty can ever please me as much," replied Angélique, softly.

Nature has put into a woman's heart so great a desire to please, so great a need of love, that even in a bigoted young girl ideas of a future life and of working for salvation must succumb in some degree to the first joys of marriage. So that, since the month of April, the period at which they were married, until the beginning of the winter, the married pair had enjoyed a perfect union. Love and work have the virtue of making a man indifferent to external matters. Obligated to spend half the day at the Palais de Justice, required to debate the solemn interests of the life or fate of men, Granville was less likely than other husbands to see or know what went on within his own household. If on Fridays his table was served with a *maigre* dinner, if by chance he asked for a dish of meat without obtaining it, his wife, forbidden by the Gospels to tell a lie, contrived by various little deceptions (allowable in the interests of religion) to make her premeditated purpose appear like an act of forgetfulness or the result of an empty market; she excused herself often by throwing the blame upon her cook, and even went so far on one occasion as to scold him for it. At this period young

magistrates were not in the habit of keeping fasts, Ember-days, and vigils as they do in our time; Granville therefore did not at first notice the periodicity of his *maigre* meals, which his wife, moreover, took wily care to make extremely delicate by means of teal, wild-duck, and fish, the amphibious flesh of which, or the careful seasoning, deceived his taste.

Thus the young magistrate lived, without being aware of it, in an orthodox manner, and earned his salvation unknown to himself. On week-days he did not know if his wife went to church or not. On Sundays, by a very natural courtesy, he accompanied her to mass as if to reward her for occasionally sacrificing vespers to be with him; he therefore did not at first realize the rigidity of his wife's pious habits. Theatres being intolerable in summer on account of the heat, Granville had no occasion to ask his wife to go there; the serious question of theatre-going was, therefore, not mooted. In the first months of a marriage to which a man has been led by the beauty of a young girl, he is never exacting in his demands; youth is more eager than discriminating. How could he see the coldness, the reserve, the frigidity of a woman to whom he attributed a warmth of enthusiasm equal to his own? It is necessary to reach a certain conjugal tranquillity before perceiving that a true *dévoté* accepts a man's love with her arms crossed. Granville, thus in the dark, regarded himself as sufficiently happy until a fatal event came to influence the future of his marriage.

In the month of September, 1808, the canon of the cathedral at Bayeux, who had formerly directed the

consciences of Madame Bontems and her daughter came to Paris, led by an ambition to obtain a post in one of the great churches, no doubt considering it as the stepping-stone to a bishopric. In recovering his former power over his lamb he shuddered, as he said, to find her already so changed by the air of Paris; and he set himself to the work of drawing her back to his chilly fold. Frightened by the remonstrances of the ex-canon, — a man about thirty-eight years old, who brought into the midst of the enlightened and tolerant clergy of Paris the harshness of provincial Catholicism, with its inflexible bigotry, whose manifold exactions are so many shackles to timid souls, — Madame de Granville repented of her sins and returned to her Jansenism.

It would be wearisome to describe, step by step, the incidents which led insensibly to unhappiness within the bosom of the Granville household; it will perhaps suffice to relate the principal facts without being scrupulous to give them their proper order and sequence. The first misunderstanding between the young couple was, however, sufficiently striking to be carefully related here.

When Granville wished to take his wife into society she never refused any staid receptions, or dinners, concerts, and assemblies at the houses of magistrates ranking above her husband in the judicial hierarchy; but she contrived, for a long time, under pretext of a headache or other illness, to avoid a ball. One day Granville, impatient at last with these wilful excuses, suppressed the written notice of a ball at the house of a councillor of State, and deceived his wife by a ver-

hal invitation. When the evening came her health was not in question, and he took her, for the first time, to a really magnificent fête.

"My dear," he said, after their return, observing her depressed air, which annoyed him, "your position as my wife, the rank to which you are entitled in society, and the fortune you enjoy, impose obligations upon you which you cannot escape. You ought to go with me into society, especially to large balls, and appear there in a suitable manner."

"But, my dear friend, what was there so unsuitable in my dress?"

"I did not refer to your dress, my dear, but to your manner. When a young man came up to speak to you, you grew so distant that a foolish observer might have thought that you feared for your virtue. You seemed to think that a smile would compromise you; you really appeared to be asking God to forgive the sins of the persons who surrounded you. The world, my dear angel, is not a convent. As you yourself have mentioned dress, I will also say that it is a duty in your position to follow the fashions and usages of society."

"Do you wish me to show my shape like those brazen women I saw last night, who wore their gowns so low that any one could plunge his immodest eyes on their bare shoulders and —"

"There's a difference, my dear, between uncovering the whole bust and giving grace and charm to the figure," said the husband, interrupting the wife. "You wore three rows of tulle ruches swathing your neck up to your chin. You really seem to have begged

your dressmaker to destroy the grace of your shoulders and the outline of your bust with as much care as a coquettish woman puts into the choice of becoming garments. Your neck was buried under such innumerable pleats and folds that people laughed last night at your affected modesty. You would be horrified if I repeated to you the unpleasant things that were said of you."

"Those to whom such obscenities are pleasing will not be burdened by the weight of my sins," replied the young wife, dryly.

"You did not dance," said Granville.

"I shall never dance," she replied.

"But if I say that you ought to dance?" said the magistrate, hastily. "Yes, you ought to follow the fashions, wear flowers in your hair, and diamonds. Reflect, my dear, that rich people, and we are rich, are bound to maintain the luxury of a State. Isn't it better to keep the manufactories busy and prosperous than spend your money in alms, through the clergy?"

"You talk like a politician," said Angélique.

"And you like a churchman," he replied, sharply.

The discussion now became very bitter. Madame de Granville put into her answers, which were very gentle, and uttered in tones as clear as the tinkling of a bell, a stolid obstinacy which betrayed the sacerdotal influence. She claimed the rights which Granville's promise secured to her, and told him that her confessor had expressly forbidden her to go to balls. In reply Granville endeavored to prove to her that the priest was exceeding the rights of his office according to the regulations of the Church itself.

This odious dispute was renewed with far more violence and acrimony on both sides when Granville wished his wife to accompany him to the theatre. Finally the husband, for the sole purpose of breaking down the pernicious influence exercised by the confessor, brought the quarrel to such a pitch that Madame de Granville, driven to bay, wrote to the court of Rome to inquire whether a woman could, without losing her salvation, wear a low dress and go to the theatre to please her husband. An answer was promptly returned by the venerable Pius VII., who strongly condemned the wife's resistance and blamed the confessor. This letter, a true conjugal catechism, seemed as if it were dictated by the tender voice of Fénelon, whose grace and sweetness emanated from it. "A wife," it said, "is in her right place wherever her husband takes her." "If she commits a sin by his order, it is not she who will answer for that sin." These two passages in the pope's homily made Madame de Granville and her confessor accuse the pontiff of irreligion.

Before the letter arrived, Granville had discovered the strict observance of the ecclesiastical laws of fasting, which his wife now imposed upon him more openly; and he gave orders to the servants that he himself was to be served with meat daily. Notwithstanding the extreme displeasure which this order caused his wife, Granville, to whom feast or fast was of little real consequence, maintained it with virile firmness. The feeblest of thinking creatures is wounded in his inmost being when another will than his own imposes secretly a thing he would have done

of his own monition willingly. Of all tyrannies, the most odious is that which deprives the soul of the merit of its actions and its thoughts; the mind is made to abdicate without having reigned. The sweetest word to say, the tenderest feeling to express, die on our lips when we think they are compulsory.

Before long the young magistrate gave up receiving his friends either at dinner or in the evening; the house soon seemed to be one of mourning. A household which has a *dévôte* for its mistress assumes a peculiar aspect. The servants under the eye of such a woman are chosen from among those self-called pious persons who have a physiognomy of their own. Just as a jovial youth entering the gendarmerie acquires the gendarme face, so domestic servants who are trained to the practice of devotion contract a uniform and peculiar countenance, a habit of lowering the eyes, of maintaining an attitude of compunction, a livery of cant, in short, which humbugs wear marvellously well.

Besides this, *dévôtes* form among themselves a species of republic; they all know one another; their servants, whom they recommend within their own circle, are like a race apart, preserved by them as horse-breeders admit to their stables only such animals as possess a clear pedigree. The more a so-called unbeliever examines the home of a *dévôte*, the more he finds that everything about it is stamped with an indescribable unpleasantness. He finds there the symptoms of avarice and mystery that characterize the house of a usurer; also that perfumed dampness of incense which makes the chilly atmosphere of chapels. The paltry rigor, the poverty of ideas which appear

in all things can only be expressed by the one word *bigotry*. In these repellent, implacable houses bigotry is painted on the walls, the furniture, in the pictures, the engravings; the talk is bigoted, the silence is bigoted, the faces are bigoted. The transformation of things and men into bigotry is an inexplicable mystery; but the fact exists. Every one must have observed that bigots do not walk, or sit down, or speak, as walk, sit, and speak the rest of the world: in their presence others are embarrassed; no one laughs; all things are rigid, stiff, uniform, from the cap of the mistress of the house to her pincushion with its even rows of pins; glances are not open or frank; the servants seem shadows; the lady of the house sits enthroned on ice.

One morning poor Granville became aware, with pain and sadness, of the symptoms of bigotry now established in his home. We find in the world certain social spheres where the same effects exist, though produced by other causes. Ennui draws around these unhappy homes a circlet of iron which encloses the horrors of the desert and the infinitude of the void. A household is then, not a tomb, but something worse, — a convent.

In the centre of this glacial sphere the magistrate now contemplated his wife without passion or illusion; he remarked with keen regret the narrowness of her ideas, betrayed externally by the way the hair grew on the low forehead which was hollow beneath the temples. He saw in the perfect regularity of her features something, it is hard to say what, of fixedness and rigidity which made him almost hate the

specious gentleness by which he had been won. He felt that the day might come when those thin lips would say to him in presence of some misfortune: "It is sent for your good, my friend."

Madame de Granville's face was gradually assuming a wan complexion and a stern expression which killed all joy in those who came in contact with her. Was this change brought about by the ascetic habits of a piety which is no more true piety than avarice is economy; or was it produced by the dryness natural to a bigoted soul? It would be difficult to say; beauty without passion is perhaps an imposture. The imperturbable smile which this young woman trained upon her face as she looked at her husband, seemed to be a sort of jesuitized formula of happiness by which she believed she satisfied the demands of marriage. Her charity wounded, her passionless beauty seemed a monstrosity to those who observed her; the softest of her speeches made them impatient, for she was not obeying a feeling, but a sense of duty.

There are certain defects which, in a woman, will often yield to lessons of experience or to the influence of a husband, but nothing can ever overcome the tyranny of false religious ideas. An eternity of happiness to win, put into the scales against earthly pleasure, will always triumph, and make all things bearable. May not this be called deified egotism, the *I* beyond the grave? Even the pope was condemned before the judgment-seat of the canon and the young *dévôte*. The impossibility of being wrong is a feeling that ends by superseding all others in these despotic souls.

Thus, for some time past, an underground struggle had been going on between the opposing ideas of husband and wife, but Granville was now weary of a battle which he saw would never cease. What husband could bear incessantly before him the sight of a face hypocritically affectionate, and the annoyance of categorical remonstrances opposed to his slightest will? How treat a woman who uses your passion to protect her own want of feeling, who seems resolved to remain inexorably gentle, and prepares with delight to play the part of victim, regarding her husband as an instrument of God, — a scourge, whose flagellations are to spare her those of purgatory? But what description can give an idea of these women who make virtue odious by distorting the precepts of a religion which Saint John summed up in one, namely: “Love one another?”

Thus, in that domestic existence which needs so much expansion, Granville’s life was now companionless. Nothing in his home was sympathetic to him. The large crucifix placed between his wife’s bed and his own was like a symbol of his destiny. Did it not represent the killing of a divine thing, — the death of a God-man in all the beauty of life and youth? The ivory of that cross was less cold than Angélique as she sacrificed her husband in the name of virtue. The misery of the young magistrate became intense; he went alone into the world, and to theatres; his wife saw only duties, and pleasures to be shunned in marriage, but what could he say? he could not even complain. He possessed a young and pretty wife, attached to her duties, virtuous, — the model, in fact, of all the

virtues. She brought him a child every year; nursed her children, and trained them up to the highest principles. Her charitable soul was thought angelic. The elderly women who composed the society in which she lived (for in those days young women had not as yet taken it into their heads to make a fashion of devotion) admired Madame de Granville's zealous piety, and regarded her, if not as a virgin, at least as a martyr.

Insensibly, Granville, overwhelmed with toil, deprived of pleasures, weary of society where he wandered alone, fell, by the time he was thirty-two, into a condition of painful apathy. Life became odious to him. Having too high a sense of his obligations to allow himself to fall into irregular ways, he endeavored to stupefy himself by toil, and began a great work on a legal subject. But he did not long enjoy that form of monastic peace on which he had counted.

When the pious Angélique saw that he deserted society and worked at home with a sort of regularity, she thought the time had come to convert him. To feel that her husband's views were not Christian was a genuine grief to her; she often wept at the thought that if he died suddenly he would perish in his sin, and she could then have no hope of saving him from the flames of eternal punishment. Henceforth Granville became a target for the petty thrusts, the paltry arguments, the narrow views by which his wife, who thought she had won a first victory by withdrawing him from the world, endeavored to obtain a second by bringing him into the pale of the Church.

This was the last drop to his cup of misery. What

could be more intolerable than a dumb struggle in which the obstinacy of a narrow mind endeavored to subdue the intelligence of the lawyer; what more horrible to bear than this acrid nagging to which a generous nature would far prefer an open stab? Granville deserted his house, where all was now unbearable to him. His children, subjected to the cold despotism of their mother, were not allowed to accompany him to the theatre; he was literally unable to give them a single pleasure without drawing down upon them a rebuke from his wife. This man, naturally loving, was driven into a condition of indifference, of selfish egotism, which to him was worse than death.

He saved his sons as soon as possible from the hell of this life by sending them to school at an early age, and by maintaining firmly his right to manage them. He did not interfere, or interfered very rarely, between the mother and her daughters, though he resolved to marry the latter as soon as they attained to a marriageable age. If he had taken a more decided and violent course nothing would have justified it. His wife, supported by the formidable circle of pious dowagers among whom she lived, could have shown his injustice to all the world. Granville had literally no other resource than a life of isolation. Crushed under the tyranny of these misfortunes, his very features, withered and hardened by grief and toil, became displeasing to himself; he shrank from all intercourse with others, especially with women of society, from whom he despaired of gaining any comfort.

The didactic history of this sad household during the fifteen years between 1806 and 1821 offers no

scene that is worthy of being related. Madame de Granville remained precisely the same woman after she had lost her husband's heart as she was in the days when she called herself happy. She made novenas, praying God and the saints to enlighten her mind as to the faults by which she displeased her husband, and to show her the means of bringing back that erring sheep into the fold. But the more fervent her prayers, the less her husband appeared in his home. For five years past Granville, now attorney-general under the Restoration, had taken up his abode on the ground-floor of his house to avoid the necessity of living with his wife. Every morning a scene took place which (if we may believe the gossip of society) occurs in the bosom of many a family, — produced by incompatibility of temper, or by mental and physical diseases, or by antagonisms which bring the results related in this history to many a marriage. Every morning at eight o'clock the countess's waiting-woman, looking much like a nun, rang at the door of the count's apartment. Shown into the salon adjoining the magistrate's study, she gave to the valet, and always in the same tone, this stereotyped message: —

“Madame begs to know if Monsieur le comte has passed a good night, and whether she shall have the pleasure of breakfasting with him.”

“Monsieur,” the valet would reply, after conveying the message to his master, “presents his regards to Madame la comtesse and begs her to excuse him; an important affair obliges him to go to the Palais at once.”

A few moments later the maid would reappear to

ask in Madame's name if she should have the pleasure of seeing Monsieur le comte before he went out.

"He has gone already," the valet would reply, though the count's carriage might be still in the courtyard.

This ambassadorial dialogue was a daily ceremony. Granville's valet, who, being a favorite with his master, was the cause of more than one quarrel in the household on account of his irreligion and moral laxity, would sometimes take the message as a matter of form into the study when the count was not there, bringing back the accustomed answer. The afflicted wife would often watch for her husband's return and go down to the vestibule and place herself in his way to awaken his remorse. This petty teasing, characteristic of monastic life, was a strong feature in the nature of this woman, who, though she was only thirty-five, now looked to be over forty.

The presidency of a royal court in the provinces was offered to the Comte de Granville, who stood well in favor with the King, but he begged the ministry to allow him to remain in Paris. This refusal, the reasons for which were known only to the Keeper of the Seals, suggested various strange conjectures among the intimates of the countess, and more especially to her confessor. Granville, the possessor of a hundred thousand francs a year, belonged to one of the highest families in Normandy; his appointment to a royal court was a first step to the peerage. Why, then, such a lack of ambition? Why had he given up his great work on Law? Whence this unnatural life which had made him for the last five years almost a

stranger to his home, his duties, and to all that ought to be dear to him? The countess's confessor, who relied on the support of the families where he ruled to advance him to a bishopric, had met with disappointment from Granville, who refused him his influence; and he now aspersed him with suppositions.

"If Monsieur le comte," he said, "was reluctant to live in the provinces, it was probably because he feared the necessity of having to lead a moral life. The position of a chief-justice would force him to live with his wife and abandon all illicit connections. A woman as pure as the Comtesse de Granville could never overlook the fact, if it came to her knowledge, of her husband's irregularities.

Angélique's dowager friends did not leave her in ignorance of these remarks, which, alas! were not groundless; the effect upon her was that of a thunder-bolt.

Without any just ideas of life or of society, ignorant of love and its madness, Madame de Granville was so far from supposing that marriage could bring other troubles than those which alienated her from her husband, that she thought him incapable of the faults which are the crimes of married life. When the count no longer sought her society and lived apart, she imagined that the calmness of such a life was that of nature. She had given him all the affection her heart was capable of giving to a man, and these conjectures of her confessor completely destroyed all the illusions in which she had lived up to that moment. At first, therefore, she defended her husband; although, at the same time, she was unable to put away the suspicions

so cleverly introduced into her mind. This struggle caused such ravages in her feeble brain that before long her health gave way and she fell a victim to slow fever.

These events took place during the Lent of 1822, but her piety would not relax its austerities, and she finally reached a state of exhaustion in which her very life seemed threatened. Granville's indifference to her condition wounded her deeply. His attentions were more like those that a nephew compels himself to pay to an uncle. Though the countess tried to greet her husband with pleasant words, and renounced for the time being her system of nagging remonstrance, the sourness of the *dévoté* was still perceptible, and often destroyed by a few words the work of days.

Toward the end of May, the balmy breath of spring and a more nourishing diet than Lent allowed brought back some strength to Madame de Granville. One morning, on her return from mass, she seated herself on a stone bench in her little garden, where the warm caresses of the sunshine recalled to her the pleasant early days of her marriage. Her mind took in at a glance the whole of her married life, striving to see in what possible way she could have failed in her duty as wife and mother. While she sat there the Abbé Fontanon appeared, in a state of very evident agitation.

"Has anything happened to distress you, father?" she asked, with filial solicitude.

"Ah! I would that all the misfortunes which the hand of God is laying heavily upon you, were laid on me," said the Norman priest. "But, my worthy friend, these are trials to which you must submit."

"Can any chastisement be greater than that to which the Divine Providence has already subjected me, using my husband as the instrument of its wrath?"

"Prepare yourself, my daughter, for greater sorrow than any you have hitherto undergone."

"Then I thank God that he deigns to make use of you to lay his will upon me," said the countess, "following the vials of his wrath with the treasures of his mercy, even as he showed to Hagar in the desert a living spring."

"He allots your penalties to the weight of your sins and the measure of your resignation," said the priest.

"Speak, father; I am ready to hear all;" so saying, the countess raised her eyes to heaven; then she said again, "Speak, Monsieur Fontanon."

"For the last seven years Monsieur de Granville has committed the crime of adultery with a concubine by whom he has two children. He has spent upon this illicit household more than five hundred thousand francs, which ought to have belonged to his legitimate family."

"I must see that with my own eyes before I believe it," said the countess.

"No, be very careful to avoid that," said the priest. "My daughter, it is your duty to forgive, and to wait, in prayer, till God sees fit to change your husband's heart. You must not employ such human means against him."

The long conversation which followed produced a violent change in the whole manner and appearance of the countess. She dismissed the confessor at last, and appeared with a flushed face before her servants,

who were frightened by an activity which seemed almost insane. She ordered her carriage, then she countermanded it, ordered it again, and changed her mind a score of times within an hour. Finally, however, she appeared to come to a decisive resolution, and started from home at three o'clock, leaving her household amazed at her sudden action.

"Will your master be home to dinner?" she asked the valet (to whom she usually never spoke) as she left the house.

"No, madame."

"Did he go to the Palais this morning?"

"Yes, madame."

"To-day is Monday?"

"Yes, madame."

"Is the Palais open on Mondays now?"

"The devil take her!" thought the valet as the countess got into her carriage and gave the order: "Rue Taitbout."

Caroline de Bellefeuille was weeping; beside her was Roger, holding one of her hands in both of his. He was silent, looking alternately at little Charles, who could not understand his mother's grief, at the cradle where the baby Eugénie was sleeping, and then at the face of his friend, where the tears were falling like rain on a sunshiny day.

"Yes, my angel," said Roger, after a long silence, "that is the truth; I am married. But some day, I hope, I may have but one life, one home. My wife is in wretched health; I do not wish her death; but if it pleases God to take her, I think she will be happier

in paradise than she has been in a world the pains and pleasures of which have never touched her."

"I hate that woman! How could she make you so unhappy? And yet it is to that misfortune that I owe my happiness."

Her tears ceased suddenly.

"Caroline, let us hope on," cried Roger, with a kiss. "Never mind what the abbé said to you. Though that confessor is a dangerous man on account of his influence in the Church, if he attempts to disturb our relation I shall —"

"What?"

"Take you to Italy; I will flee —"

A cry coming from the next room made them start; they both rushed there, and found Madame de Granville fainting on the floor. When she recovered her senses she gave a deep sigh on seeing herself between her husband and her rival, whom she pushed aside with an involuntary gesture of contempt.

Caroline rose to go.

"Stay where you are," said the count. "This is your house."

Then he took his fainting wife in his arms and carried her to her carriage, into which he followed her.

"What has made you desire my death? Why should you wish to flee me?" she asked, in a weak voice, looking at her husband with as much indignation as grief. "Was I not young? Did you not think me beautiful? What blame can you lay at my door? Did I ever deceive you? Have I not been a good and virtuous wife to you? My heart has held no image but yours; my ears have listened to no voice but

yours. What duty did I fail to perform? Have I ever refused you anything?"

"Yes; happiness," replied the count, in a firm voice. "There are two ways of serving God. Some Christians imagine that by entering a church and saying a Pater Noster, by hearing mass at stated times and abstaining from sinful acts they must win heaven; such persons go to hell; they have never loved God for God's sake; they do not worship him as he seeks to be worshipped; they have made him no sacrifice. Though gentle apparently, they are harsh to their neighbor; they see the law, the letter, but not the spirit. That is how you have acted with your earthly husband. You have sacrificed my happiness to your salvation. You were absorbed in the contemplation of that when I came to you with eager heart; you wept and fasted when you might have eased and brightened my toil; you have never satisfied one pleasurable desire of my life."

"But if those desires were criminal," cried the countess, hotly, "was I to lose my soul to please you?"

"That sacrifice a more loving woman has had the courage to make," replied the count, coldly.

"Oh, God!" she said, weeping. "Thou hearest him! Was he worthy of the prayers and penances in which I have spent my life to redeem his sins and my own? Of what good is virtue?"

"To win heaven, my dear; you could not be the bride of heaven and of man both; it was bigamy. You should have chosen between a husband and a convent. Instead of that, for the sake of your future salvation, you have robbed your soul and mine of

love, of all the devotion God bestows upon a woman; of the earthly emotions you have kept but one — and that is hatred.”

“Have I not loved you?”

“No.”

“What, then, is love?” she said, involuntarily.

“Love, my dear?” said Granville, with a sort of ironical surprise. “You are not in a condition to understand it. The sky of Normandy is never that of Spain. Perhaps the question of climate is really one of the secrets of unhappiness. Love is a mutual yielding to each other’s likes and dislikes and dividing them. Love finds pleasure in pain, in sacrificing to another the opinion of the world, self-love, self-interest, religion even, — regarding all such offerings as grains of incense burned on the altar of an idol; that is love.”

“The love of a ballet-girl,” said the countess, horrified; “such passions cannot last; they leave nothing behind them but cinders and ashes, remorse and despair. A wife should give her husband, as I think, true friendship, an equable warmth, an —”

“You talk of warmth as negroes talk of ice,” interrupted the count, with a sardonic smile. “Remember that the humblest wild-flower is more to us than a rose with thorns. But,” he added, “I will do you justice. You have so firmly maintained the line of conduct prescribed by law that, in order to show you where you have failed toward me, I should have to enter upon certain details which your dignity would not permit, and say certain things which would seem to you the reverse of moral.”

"Do you dare to speak of morality, — you who are leaving the house of a mistress where you have squandered the property of your children in debauchery?" cried the countess.

"Madame, I stop you there," said the count, coolly, interrupting his wife. "If Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille is rich it is not at my expense. My uncle was master of his fortune; he had many heirs. During his lifetime, and solely out of regard for a young woman whom he considered in the light of a niece, he gave her the estate of Bellefeuille."

"Such conduct is worthy of a Jacobin!" cried the pious Angélique.

"You forget that your father was one of those Jacobins whom you, a woman, condemn with so little charity," said the count, sternly. "The citizen Bontems was signing death-warrants at the time when my uncle was rendering great services to France."

Madame de Granville made no reply. But, after a moment's silence, the recollection of what she had just seen awoke the jealousy which nothing can quench in a woman's soul, and she said, in a low voice, as if speaking to herself: —

"How can a man lose his soul and that of others in this way?"

"Ah! madame," said the count, weary of the fruitless conversation, "perhaps it is you who will have to answer for all this."

These words made the countess tremble.

"But you will no doubt be excused in the eyes of that indulgent Judge who understands our faults," he added, "in virtue of the sincerity with which you have

wrought the ruin of my life. I do not hate you; I hate those who have distorted your heart and mind. You have prayed for me doubtless as sincerely as Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille has given me her heart and crowned me with love. You should have been both mistress and saint. Do me the justice to acknowledge that I have not been either wicked or debauched. My morals are pure. But alas! at the end of seven years' wretchedness, the need of being happy led me, almost insensibly, to love another woman, and to create for myself another home than mine. Do not think I am the only man in Paris who has done this. Thousands of other husbands are driven, by one cause or another, to lead this double life."

"O God!" cried the countess, "how heavy is the cross I have to bear! If the husband whom thou gavest me in thy wrath can be happy only through my death, recall me to thy bosom!"

"Had you shown those admirable feelings of self-sacrifice earlier," said the count, coldly, "we should still be happy."

"Well, then," said Angélique, bursting into tears, "forgive me if I have really done wrong. Yes, I am ready to obey you in all things, certain that you will only ask that which is natural and right. Henceforth I will be to you whatever you desire."

"If it is your intention to force me to say that I no longer love you, I must have the dreadful courage to say it. Can I control my heart? Can I efface in one moment the memories of fifteen years of misery? I love no more. Those words enfold a mystery as deep

as that contained in those other words, 'I love.' Esteem, respect, regard may be obtained, and lost, and won again, but love, ah, never! I might goad myself a thousand years and it could not live again, especially for one who has wilfully destroyed her charm."

"Ah! Monsieur le comte, I sincerely hope the day may never come when those words shall be said to you by her you love, in the tone and manner with which you say them now."

"Will you come with me to-night to the Opera and wear a ball dress?"

The shudder of repugnance which that sudden demand produced was her answer to the question.

III.

RESULT.

ON one of the first days of December, 1833, a man whose snow-white hair and countenance appeared to show that grief had aged him more than years (for he seemed about sixty) was passing through the rue Gaillon after midnight. He paused before a poor-looking house of three stories to examine one of the windows which were placed at equal distances in the mansarde roof. A faint gleam came from its humble sash, in which some panes were replaced by paper. The passer was looking at that flickering light with the idle curiosity of a Parisian loungeur, when a young man came suddenly and rapidly from the house. As the pale rays of the street lamp fell upon the face of the older man, he seemed not wholly surprised when, in spite of the darkness, the young man came to him, with the precautions used in Paris when one fears to be mistaken in a recognition.

"What!" exclaimed the latter, "is it really you, Monsieur le comte, alone, on foot, at this hour, and so far from the rue Saint-Lazare? Allow me the honor of offering you my arm. The pavement to-night is so slippery that unless we support each other," he added, to spare the pride of the old man, "we shall find it difficult to escape a fall."

"But, my dear friend, I am only fifty-nine years of age — unhappily for me," said the Comte de Granville. "So celebrated a physician as yourself ought to know that a man is in his full vigor at that time of life."

"Then you must be engaged in some love affair," replied Horace Bianchon, laughing. "You are not, I am sure, accustomed to go on foot. When a man has such horses as yours —"

"But the greater part of the time," said the Comte de Granville, "I do return from the Palais, or the Cercle des Étrangers, on foot"

"And carrying, no doubt, on your person large sums of money. Isn't that inviting a dagger, Monsieur le comte?"

"I am not afraid of such daggers," replied the count with a careless though melancholy air.

"But at any rate you ought not to stand still," said the physician, drawing the magistrate on toward the boulevard. "A little more, and I shall think you want to rob me of your last illness, and to die by another hand than mine."

"Well, you surprised me engaged in a bit of spying," said the count, smiling. "Whether I pass through this street on foot or in a carriage, at any hour of the night I am certain to see at a third story window of the house you have just left the shadow of a person who appears to be working with heroic courage."

So saying, the count stopped short, as if some sudden pang had seized him.

"I take as much interest in that attic," he continued, "as a Parisian bourgeois feels in the completion of the Palais-Royal —"

"Well," cried Horace, eagerly, interrupting the count, "I can tell you —"

"Tell me nothing," said Granville, cutting short the doctor's words. "I would n't give a penny to know if the shadow that flickers on that ragged curtain is that of a man or woman, or if the occupant of that garret is happy or unhappy. If I was surprised to-night not to see that person working, and if I stopped for a moment to gaze at the window, it was solely for the amusement of making conjectures as numerous and as silly as those the street idlers make about buildings in course of erection. For the last nine years, my young —"

He stopped, seemed to hesitate to use some expression, and then, with a hasty gesture, added: —

"No, I will not call you friend; I detest every semblance of sentiment. For the last nine years, as I was saying, I am no longer surprised that old people take pleasure in cultivating flowers and planting trees. The events of life have taught them not to trust in human affections. I grew an old man suddenly; I attach myself now to none but animals; I will call no man friend. I abhor the life of the world, in which I am alone. Nothing, nothing," added the count, with an expression which made the young man shudder,—"nothing can move me now, and nothing can interest me."

"But you have children?"

"My children!" he replied, in a tone of strange bitterness. "Yes, my eldest daughter is the Comtesse de Vandenesse. As for the other, her sister's marriage has opened the way to hers. My two sons have met with great success; the vicomte is attorney-gen-

eral at Limoges, and the younger is king's attorney. My children have their own interests, cares, and solitudes. If a single one among them had tried to fill the void that is *here*," he said, striking his breast, "well, that one would have ruined his or her life by sacrificing it to me! And why have done so, after all, merely to brighten my few remaining years? Besides, could it have been done? Should I not have looked upon such generous care as the payment of a debt? But —"

Here the old man smiled with deepest irony.

"But, doctor, the lessons we teach our children in arithmetic are never lost; they learn how to calculate—their inheritance. At this moment mine are reckoning on that."

"Oh! Monsieur le comte, how can such thoughts have come into your mind?— you, so kind, so obliging, so humane? Am I not myself a living proof of the beneficence of which you take so broad and grand a view?"

"For my own pleasure," said the count, hastily. "I pay for a sensation as I shall pay to-morrow in piles of gold for the paltry excitement of play, which stirs my heart for an instant. I help my fellow-mortals for the same reason that I play at cards. Therefore I look for no gratitude from any one. Ah! young man, the events of life have flowed across my soul like the lava of Vesuvius through Herculaneum; the city exists, dead."

"Those who have brought a soul so warm and living as yours to such a point of insensibility are guilty of an awful wrong."

"Not another word!" cried the count, with a look of horror.

"You have a malady upon you which you ought to let me cure," said Bianchon, in a voice of emotion.

"Do you know a cure for death?" exclaimed the count, impatiently.

"Yes, Monsieur le comte, I will engage to stir that heart you call so dead."

"Are you another Talma?"

"No; but Nature is as far superior to Talma as Talma may be to me. Hear me: that garret at which you gazed with interest is inhabited by a woman, some thirty years of age, in whom love has become fanaticism. The object of her worship is a young man of fine appearance, to whom some evil genius gave at birth all the vices of humanity. He is a gambler; whether he loves women or wine best no one could decide; he has committed, to my knowledge, crimes that should have brought him to the correctional police. Well, that unhappy woman sacrificed for him a happy life, a man who adored her, by whom she had two children — What is it, Monsieur le comte? are you ill?"

"No, nothing; go on!"

"She has let him squander her whole property; she would give him, I think, the world if she had it; night and day she works; often, without a murmur, she has seen that monster take the money she had earned to clothe her children — nay, their very food for the morrow! Three days ago she sold her hair, the finest I ever saw; that man came in before she hid the bit of gold: he claimed it; for a smile, a kiss,

she gave him the value of days of life and comfort! Is not such love both shocking and sublime? But toil and hunger have begun to waste her strength; the cries of her children torture her; she has fallen ill; to-night she is moaning on her pallet, unable, as you saw, to work. The children have had no food all day; they have ceased to cry, being too weak; they were silent when I got there."

Bianchon stopped. The Comte de Granville, as if in spite of himself, had plunged his hand into his pocket.

"I foresee, my young friend, that she will live," said the old man, "if you take care of her."

"Ah! poor creature," cried the doctor, "who would not take care of one so wretched? But I hope to do more; I hope to cure her of her love."

"But," said the count, withdrawing his hand full of bank-notes from his pocket, "why should I pity a wretchedness whose joys would seem to me worth more than all my fortune? She feels, she lives, that woman! Louis XV. would have given his whole kingdom to rise from his coffin and have three days of youth and life. Is not that the history of millions of dead men, millions of sick men, millions of old men?"

"Poor Caroline!" exclaimed the physician.

Hearing that name the Comte de Granville quivered; he seized the arm of his companion, who fancied himself gripped by iron pincers.

"Is she Caroline Crochard?" asked the old man, in a faltering voice.

"Then you know her?" replied the doctor.

"And that wretch is named Solvet— Ah! you have kept your word; you have stirred my heart by the most terrible sensation I shall know till I am dust," said the count. "Another of hell's gifts!" he cried; "but I know how to pay them back."

At that moment the count and Bianchon had reached the corner of the rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin. One of those night-birds, a scavenger, with his basket on his back and a hook in his hand, was close beside the post where the count had now stopped short. The face of the old rag-picker was worthy of those which Charlet has immortalized in his sketches of the school of sweepers.

"Do you often pick up thousand-franc notes?" the count said to him.

"Sometimes, my master."

"Do you return them?"

"That's according to the reward offered."

"Here, my man," cried the count, giving him a note for a thousand francs. "Take that; but remember that I give it to you on condition that you spend it at a tavern, get drunk upon it, quarrel, beat your wife, stab your friends. That will set the watch, and surgeons and doctors, perhaps the gendarmes, the attorneys, the judges and the jailers all to work. Don't change that programme, or the devil will revenge it on you."

It needs an artist with the pencil of Charlet and Callot and the brushes of Teniers and Rembrandt to give a true idea of this nocturnal scene.

"There's my account settled, for the present, with hell, and I have had some pleasure out of my money,"

said the count in a deep voice, pointing out to the stupefied physician the indescribable face of the gaping rag-picker. "As for Caroline Crochard," he continued, "she may die in the tortures of hunger and thirst, listening to the cries of her starving children, recognizing the vileness of that man she loves. I will not give one penny to keep her from suffering; and I will never speak to you again, for the sole reason that you have succored her."

The count left Bianchon standing motionless as a statue, and disappeared, moving with the rapidity of a young man in the direction of the rue Saint-Lazare. When he reached the little house which he occupied in that street, he saw, with some surprise, a carriage before the door.

"Monsieur le procureur du roi," said his valet when he entered, "has been here an hour, waiting to speak with monsieur. He is in monsieur's bedroom."

Granville made a sign to the man, who retired.

"What motive could be strong enough to make you break my express orders that none of my children should come to this house without being sent for?" he said to his son as he entered the room.

"Father," said the son, respectfully, in a voice that trembled, "I feel sure you will pardon me when you have heard my reason."

"Your answer is a proper one," said his father, pointing to a chair. "Sit down; but whether I sit or walk about, pay no attention to my movements."

"Father," said the procureur du roi, "a young lad has been arrested this evening at the house of a friend

of mine, where he committed a theft; the lad appeals to you and says he is your son."

"His name?" asked the count, trembling.

"Charles Crochard."

"Enough," said the father, with an imperative gesture.

Granville walked up and down the room in a deep silence which his son was careful not to break.

"My son," he said at last, in a tone so gentle, so paternal that the young man quivered, "Charles Crochard has told the truth. I am glad that you have come to me, my good Eugène. Here is a sum of money," he added, taking up a mass of bank-bills, "which you must use as you see fit in this affair. I trust in you, and I approve, in advance, all that you may do, whether at the present time, or in the future. Eugène, my dear son, kiss me; perhaps we now see each other for the last time. To-morrow I shall ask leave of absence of the king and start for Italy. Though a father is not bound to account to his children for his conduct, he ought to leave them as a legacy the experience which fate has allotted to him,—it is a part of their inheritance. When you marry," continued the count, with an involuntary shudder, "do not commit that act, the most important of all those imposed upon us by society, thoughtlessly. Study long the character of the woman with whom you associate yourself for life; also consult me; I should wish to judge her for myself. A want of union between husband and wife, however it may be caused, leads to frightful evils. We are, sooner or later, punished for

not obeying social laws — But as to that, I will write to you from Florence; a father, especially if he has the honor to be a judge in the highest courts of law, ought not to blush in presence of his son. Farewell.”

THE PEACE OF A HOME.

THE PEACE OF A HOME.

TO MY DEAR NIECE, VALENTINE SURVILLE.

THE incident related in this Scene took place toward the end of November, in the year 1809, at the period when the fleeting empire of Napoleon was at its apogee of splendor. The trumpets of the victory of Wagram were still echoing in the heart of the Austrian monarchy. Peace was signed between France and the Coalition. Kings and princes were coming, like planets, to accomplish their evolutions round Napoleon, who gave himself the happiness of dragging all Europe in his suite, — a magnificent exercise of power, which he displayed later, and more signally, at Dresden.

Never, within the knowledge of contemporaries, did Paris witness such splendid fêtes as those which preceded and followed the marriage of the sovereign with the archduchess of Austria. Never, in the grandest days of the old monarchy, had so many crowned heads gathered on the banks of the Seine, and never was the aristocracy of France so rich and brilliant. The diamonds profusely strewn upon all toilets, the gold and silver lace of the uniforms contrasted so strongly with

republican plainness that it seemed as if the riches of the globe had suddenly been poured into the salons of Paris. A general intoxication had, as it were, seized upon that empire of a day. All the military, with the one exception of their leader, were revelling like parvenus in the treasures won by millions of men in woollen epaulets, whose own demands were satisfied with scraps of red ribbon.

At this period most women affected the ease and laxity of morals which distinguished the reign of Louis XV. Whether it was in imitation of the tone of the fallen monarchy, or because certain members of the imperial family set the example (as the cavillers of the faubourg Saint-Germain averred), it is undeniable that men and women rushed into pleasures and dissipation with a daring that seemed to foreshadow a coming cataclysm.

There was, however, another reason for the license that prevailed. The infatuation of women for the military became an actual frenzy, and it suited the views of the emperor too well to allow him to curb it. The frequent call to arms, which made the treaties concluded between Napoleon and the European powers seem little more than armistices, exposed all passions and courtships to chances and changes as rapid as the marching and countermarching of the forces. Hearts became as nomad as the regiments. Between a first and a fifth bulletin from the Grand Army a woman might have been, successively, mistress and wife, mother and widow. Was it the perspective of probable widowhood, or the hope of bearing a name inscribed on the pages of history, that made these

imperial soldiers so seductive? Were women drawn to these heroes by the thought that the secret of their loves might soon be buried on a battle-field? Or may we seek the cause of their tender fanaticism in the noble attraction which courage has for women? Perhaps all these motives, which the future historians of the Empire may amuse themselves by weighing, counted for something in the facile promptitude with which they gave themselves to love. However that may be, we must admit that laurels in those days covered many a lapse from virtue; women sought those bold adventurers, who to their eyes were sources of honor, wealth, and pleasure; while to unmarried girls an epaulet, that talisman of the future, signified joy and freedom.

A trait of this epoch, unique in our annals, which may be said to characterize it, was a frantic passion for all that glittered. Never were seen such fireworks; never were diamonds so valued. Men, as eager as women for the precious white pebbles, decked themselves with them profusely. Possibly the army need of carrying booty in small compass brought jewels into this extreme prominence in France. A man was not thought ridiculous, as he would be to-day, if he appeared with the frill of his shirt and all his fingers adorned with enormous diamonds. Murat, a man by nature oriental, set the example of this absurd luxury to modern soldiers.

The Comte de Gondreville, formerly called citizen Malin, whose abduction had made him celebrated [see "An Historical Mystery"], was one of the Luculluses of that conservative Senate that conserved nothing.

He had postponed the giving of a fête in honor of the Peace in order to pay special court to Napoleon on his return to Paris by eclipsing the other flatterers who then surrounded him.

The ambassadors of 'all the powers friendly to France, the most important personages of the Empire, certain princes, and all the women distinguished in this society, were, on the evening of which we write, assembled in the salons of the opulent senator. Dancing languished, for the company awaited the Emperor, whose presence had been promised to the count. Napoleon would have kept this appointment had it not been for a scene that occurred between himself and Joséphine, — the scene in which the divorce was first discussed between them. The fact of that incident, then kept secret but revealed by history, did not reach the ears of the courtiers, and had no adverse influence on the gayety of Gondreville's fête, except by keeping the Emperor away from it. The prettiest women in Paris were present, rivalling each other in luxury, coquetry, beauty, and jewels. The Bank, the moneyed circle, proud of its wealth, seemed anxious to defy those gorgeous generals and grand-officers of the Empire, who were literally gorged with crosses and titles and decorations.

These great balls were occasions eagerly seized by the rich families to produce their young heiresses before the eyes of Napoleon's heroes, with the rash design of exchanging their solid *dot* for a very uncertain constancy. Women who thought the power of their beauty sufficient went to prove it. There, as elsewhere, pleasure was only a mask. Serene and

smiling faces, calm and undisturbed foreheads hid odious calculations; friendly assurances were hollow; and many men and women distrusted their friends even more than they did their enemies.

These observations were necessary to explain the events of the little imbroglio which makes the subject of this Scene, and the painting, slightly softened, of the tone and manners which reigned at that period in the salons of Paris.

“Turn your eyes toward that truncated column on which is a candelabrum; don’t you see that young woman with her hair *à la chinoise*, — there, in the corner, to the left? She wears blue harebells in her chestnut hair, which is coiled in a mass at the back of her head. Surely you see her now? She is so pale she must be ill; what a dainty little thing it is! now she is looking towards us; her eyes are blue, almond-shaped, enchantingly soft, made for tenderness! But look, look there! she is stooping to watch Madame de Vaudremont through this labyrinth of moving heads with their lofty *coiffures* which intercept her sight.”

“Yes, I see her, my dear fellow. You need only have said she was the fairest woman here. I’ve noticed her before; she has the most perfect complexion I have ever seen. I defy you to distinguish at this distance the pearls on her neck from the skin of it. But she is either prudish or coquettish, for the ruches on her gown will scarcely allow one to guess at her figure. But what shoulders! the dewy whiteness of a lily itself!”

“Who is she?” said the man who had spoken first.

“Ah! that I don’t know.”

"Aristocrat! Do you mean, Montcornet, to keep all the pretty women to yourself?"

"It is highly becoming in you to gird at me!" replied Montcornet, laughing. "Do you think you have the right to insult a poor general because, being the successful rival of de Soulanges, you can't cut a caper without alarming Madame de Vaudremont? How insolent you are, you government officials, who sit supreme in your chairs, while we, poor devils! have the shells whizzing round us. Come, master of petitions, let others glean in the field whose precarious possession shall not be yours till we soldiers leave it. Hey! the deuce! you should live and let live! My friend, if you did but know German women you'd be willing to serve me, I think, with this Parisian you admire."

"General, since you have already honored with your notice this woman, whom I have just seen for the first time, have the charity to tell me whether you have seen her dancing."

"My dear Martial, where do you come from? If you are sent on an embassy I augur ill of your success. Don't you see three ranks of the most finished coquettes in Paris between that lady and the swarm of dancers who are buzzing under the chandelier? Didn't you yourself need an eyeglass to discover her in the angle of that column where she seems to be buried in obscurity, in spite of the candles which blaze above her head? My dear fellow, she is probably the wife of a sub-prefect in Lippe or Dyle, who has come here to try to make a prefect of her husband."

"Then she will do it," said the master of petitions, hastily.

"I doubt it," said the colonel of cuirassiers, laughing. "She seems as new to intrigue as you are to diplomacy. I'll bet, Martial, that you can't find out how she came here."

The master of petitions looked at the colonel of cuirassiers with an air of mingled disdain and curiosity.

"Well," said Montcornet, "she arrived, no doubt, at nine o'clock, punctually, — the first guest, probably, and very annoying to Madame de Gondreville, who can't keep two ideas in her head at the same time. Snubbed by the mistress of the house, and retreating from chair to chair as each new guest arrived, till she was squeezed into that dark corner, she has n't dared to escape, shut in as she is by the jealousy of the women about her, who would like nothing better than to bury that dangerous face. Those gentle creatures, so innocent apparently, have formed a coalition against her; and that without a word to each other beyond, 'Do you know who that little woman in a blue dress can be?' Look here, Martial, if you want to be overwhelmed with flattering looks and more enticing speeches than you'll ever get again in the whole course of your life, try to break through the triple rampart that surrounds your white lady. You'll see if the stupidest of those women has n't something piquant to say, some clever trick to play to stop you before you can reach the plaintive stranger. Don't you think, by the bye, that her air is somewhat elegiac?"

"Do you think so, Montcornet? Of course she's a married woman?"

"Why not a widow?"

"She would be more lively," said the master of petitions, laughing.

"Perhaps she is a widow whose husband plays *bouillotte*," said the general.

"Since the peace there have been plenty of such widows," replied Martial. "But, my dear Montcornet, we are two idiots. That head expresses innocence; there is too much youth and candor on that forehead and about those temples; no, she cannot be a married woman. What vigorous tints in the pure skin; nothing shrunken about the texture of the nose! The lips, the chin, all is fresh on that face like the bud of a white rose. — And yet its expression is veiled by a cloud; what should make such a beautiful young creature weep?"

"Women weep for so little," said the colonel.

"Do they?" said Martial. "But she is not sad because she does not dance; her grief is not of the moment. She has made herself beautiful to-night for some purpose, one can see that. She loves already — I'll wager that she does."

"Bah! very likely she is the daughter of some penniless princelet of Germany: no one has spoken to her," said Montcornet.

"Ah! how unfortunate a penniless girl is," replied Martial. "Look at her! what grace, what delicacy! And yet not one of those shrews around her, who think themselves so sensible, has said a word to her. I wish she would smile; we could see if her teeth are beautiful."

"*Ah ça!* why, you boil up like milk!" cried the colonel, rather piqued to find a rival in his friend.

"How strange!" continued the master of petitions, paying no heed to the colonel's remark, and turning his eyeglass on the company who surrounded them, — "how strange that no one seems to know that sweet exotic flower!"

"She's a companion, or governess, probably," said Montcornet.

"Nonsense! — a governess with sapphires that are worthy of a queen, and wearing a Mechlin dress! Tell that to an ignoramus, general! You will never be strong in diplomacy if you mistake a German princess for a lady's companion."

General Montcornet here caught by the arm a stout little man, whose grizzled hair and lively eyes might be seen in all the doorways, mingling unceremoniously in the various groups, who greeted him respectfully.

"Gondreville, my dear friend," said Montcornet, "who is that charming little woman sitting over there under the great chandelier?"

"The chandelier? made by Ravrio, my dear fellow; Isabey gave the design."

"Oh, I have already recognized your taste there," said the general, "but who is the lady?"

"I don't know. Some friend of my wife, I suppose."

"Perhaps your mistress, old slyboots."

"No, no, word of honor! Madame de Gondreville is the one woman in Paris capable of inviting people whom nobody knows to her house."

In spite of this rather sour remark, the stout little

man continued to smile with inward satisfaction at the colonel's supposition. The latter now rejoined Martial among a group of other men from whom he was vainly endeavoring to find out the name of the unknown lady. The colonel caught him by the arm, and whispered:—

"My dear fellow, take care what you are doing! Madame de Vaudremont has been watching you for the last few minutes with alarming attention. She is a woman to guess from the very motion of your lips what you are saying to me. Our eyes have been too significant; she has followed their direction, and she is now more interested than we are in the little blue lady."

"That's an old bit of strategy, my dear Montcornet! Besides, what do I care? I am like the Emperor: when I make conquests I keep them."

"Martial, your conceit deserves a lesson. What, *pékin!* you who have the happiness of being the probable husband of Madame de Vaudremont, a charming widow, twenty-two years old, afflicted with four thousand napoleons a year, a woman who puts a diamond on your finger as beautiful as this," and he took the hand of the young man, who complacently allowed him to look at the ring it bore, "do *you* pretend to play Lovelace as if you were a colonel of cuirassiers and forced to sustain a military reputation in love? Reflect, my dear fellow, on what you may lose."

"It won't be my liberty, at any rate," replied Martial, with a laugh that was somewhat forced.

He cast a passionate glance at Madame de Vaudremont, who replied by a smile that was somewhat

anxious, for she had seen the general examine the ring on the young man's hand.

"Listen, Martial," said the colonel; "if you persist in hovering round my unknown lady, I will turn round and undertake the conquest of Madame de Vaudremont."

"So you may, dear cuirassier, but you won't obtain *that!*" and he put the polished nail of his thumb under his upper teeth and gave a click.

"Remember that I am a bachelor, and my sword is my fortune," said the colonel; "to dare me thus is to seat Tantalus before a feast — which he will devour."

"Br-r-r!"

This mocking accumulation of consonants served as an answer to the general's challenge. Martial looked him over gayly as he nodded his head and prepared to leave him.

The fashion of the day obliged men to wear white cassimere breeches and white silk stockings at a ball. This becoming costume brought out the perfections of Montcornet's figure. He was then about thirty-five years of age, and attracted all eyes by his height, which was that required for the cuirassiers of the Imperial Guard, the handsome uniform of which corps enhanced the dignity of his figure in spite of a certain embonpoint caused by being constantly in the saddle.

His black moustache gave a frank expression to a martial face, the forehead of which was broad and open; the nose was aquiline and the lips red. Montcornet's manners, which bore the imprint of a certain nobility, caused by the habit of command, might please a woman who would have the good sense not

to wish to make a slave of her husband. The colonel smiled as he nodded in return to the master of petitions, one of his earliest and best school friends, whose little slim figure obliged him, in order to reply to his sarcasm, to drop his satirically amical glance rather low.

The Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon was a young Provençal whom Napoleon protected, and whose chances for some nice berth in diplomacy were therefore great. He had charmed the Emperor by an Italian pliancy, by his genius for intrigue, by that eloquence of the salon and science of manners which so often and so easily stand in place of more solid and manly qualities. Though young and vivacious, his face already had the unreflecting gleam of tin, a quality indispensable to diplomatists, allowing them to hide their emotions and disguise their sentiments, if, indeed, that impassibility does not argue in them the absence of all emotion and the death of sentiments. The heart of a diplomatist may be regarded as an insoluble problem, for the three most illustrious ambassadors of the present epoch have distinguished themselves by the persistency of their hatreds and the romantic devotion of their love.

Martial belonged to the class of men who are able to calculate their future in the midst of their most eager enjoyments. He had already judged the world with the fatuity of a man *à bonnes fortunes*, disguising his real talents under the livery of mediocrity, having shrewdly remarked the rapidity with which those persons who gave little umbrage to the master made their way.

The two friends now parted with a cordial shake of the hand. The music of the ritornello, which warned the ladies it was time to form the quadrilles of a new country-dance, drove the men from the centre of the room where they were talking in groups. The rapid conversation we have just quoted, occurring in the interval between the dances, took place before the fireplace of the great salon of the hôtel Gondreville. The questions and answers had been scarcely more than whispered in each other's ear; but the chandeliers and the candles on the chimney-piece threw such a strong light on the two friends that, in spite of their diplomatic caution, their faces were unable to disguise the expression of their feelings from either the clever countess or the innocent young stranger. This detection of thought is to idlers one of the pleasures that they find in society, where so many stupid fools are bored to death — without, however, daring to acknowledge it.

To understand the interest of the conversation it is necessary to relate an event which, by invisible links, was about to unite the personages of our little drama, who were at this moment scattered about the salons.

At eleven o'clock, just as the dancers had taken their places, the most beautiful woman in Paris and the queen of fashion had entered the room. She made it a rule never to arrive at a ball until the moment when the salons had reached that condition of animated excitement which soon takes from the women present the freshness of their faces and that of their gowns. This fleeting moment may be called the spring-time of a ball. An hour later, when the pleasure is

past, fatigue appears, and the scene fades. Madame de Vaudremont never committed the mistake of staying in a ballroom till her flowers drooped, her curls uncurled, her dress was crushed, and sleep had wooed her eyelids. She was careful not to be seen, like her rivals, in drowsy beauty; she maintained her reputation for coquettish charm by retreating from a festal scene as fresh as when she entered it.

On this occasion, however, Madame de Vaudremont was destined not to be free to leave whenever she chose the salon she now entered in triumph. Pausing a moment on the threshold of the door, she cast an observing though rapid glance on the women present, studying their gowns in that instant to convince herself that hers outdid them all. The celebrated coquette then advanced into the room, on the arm of one of the bravest colonels of the artillery of the Guard, a favorite of the Emperor, the Comte de Soulanges. The momentary union of these two persons seemed to have something interesting about it, for on hearing the names announced of Monsieur de Soulanges and the Comtesse de Vaudremont several women seated like wall-flowers rose, and some men hurried from the other salons to observe this entrance. One of the jesters who are never absent from such assemblies remarked that "the ladies had as much curiosity to see a man faithful to his passion as the men had to watch the behavior of a pretty woman whom it was difficult to fix."

Though the Comte de Soulanges, a young man of twenty-six, was gifted with that high-strung temperament which gives birth to the noblest qualities of men,

his puny figure and his pallid skin did not prepossess in his favor. His black eyes showed vivacity, but he was taciturn in society, and nothing revealed in him one of those great oratorical talents which were destined to shine on the Right in the legislative assemblies of the Restoration. The Comtesse de Vaudremont, a tall, rather plump woman, with a skin that was dazzlingly white, carrying her little head marvellously well, and, possessing the immense advantage of inspiring love by the charm of her manners, was one of those beings who fulfil the promises held out by their beauty.

This couple, now the object of general attention, did not allow the general curiosity to meddle with them long. The colonel and the countess seemed perfectly to understand that chance had placed them in an awkward position. As Martial de la Roche-Hugon saw them advance, he darted behind the group of men around the fireplace, who formed a rampart behind which he could observe Madame de Vaudremont with the jealous attention of the first heat of a passion. A secret voice seemed to warn him that a success on which he prided himself might be, after all, precarious. But the coldly polite smile with which the countess thanked Monsieur de Soulanges, and the gesture with which she dismissed him as she took a seat beside the Comtesse de Gondreville, relaxed the muscles which jealousy had gathered into a knot upon Martial's face. Perceiving, however, that de Soulanges was still standing within two feet of the sofa on which she was sitting, apparently not comprehending the glance by which the young coquette had

told him that they were making themselves ridiculous, Martial, whose Provençal head was volcanic, frowned the black brows that overshadowed his blue eyes, arranged the curls of his brown hair to keep himself quiet, and, without betraying the emotion that made his heart beat, he watched the countenance of Madame de Vaudremont and that of Monsieur de Soulanges, while chattering with his neighbors.

Soulanges cast tranquil glances on the quadruple line of women who surrounded the vast salon of the senator, apparently admiring that border of diamonds, rubies, and golden wheat-ears flashing on plumed heads whose glitter paled the light of the candles, the crystal of the lustres, and the gilding of the walls. This calm, self-satisfied indifference in his rival seemed to disconcert Martial. Incapable of controlling his secret annoyance, he advanced toward Madame de Vaudremont to pay his respects to her. As he did so, Soulanges gave him a vacant look and turned away his head impertinently. Silence reigned for a moment in the salon, where curiosity seemed on tip-toe in every mind. The outstretched heads wore the oddest expressions; all present feared and expected one of those outbursts which well-bred persons seek to avoid.

Suddenly the pale face of the count became as scarlet as the facings of his uniform, and his eyes dropped to the floor as if to conceal the causes of his trouble. Observing the unknown lady in blue seated beneath the chandelier, he passed hurriedly in front of the master of petitions and took refuge in a card-room. Martial and the company present took this to mean

that Soulanges yielded the place to him, fearing the ridicule that always attends a dethroned lover. The master of petitions raised his head proudly, and his eyes fell upon the unknown lady. Then he seated himself coolly beside Madame de Vaudremont, listening to what she said with so abstracted a mind that he did not hear the words which that coquettish lady whispered behind her fan: —

“Martial, do me the favor not to wear, to-night, that ring which you got away from me. I have my reasons, which I will explain to you by and by; I want your arm, presently, to go to the Princesse de Wagram’s.”

“Why did you take that of the Comte de Soulanges to come here?” he said, hearing the end of her sentence.

“I met him on the portico,” she replied; “but leave me now; people are watching us.”

Martial rejoined Montcornet. The little blue lady had now become an object of disquietude in diverse forms to the colonel of cuirassiers, to Soulanges, Martial, and Madame de Vaudremont. When Martial flung his parting defiance at Montcornet, he rushed back to Madame de Vaudremont, whom he hastened to place in a brilliant quadrille. Under cover of the dance, which distracted his partner’s attention, he fancied he could with impunity turn his attention to the charms of his new attraction. Although he succeeded in concealing from the active eyes of the countess the first glances that he threw at the little blue lady, he was soon discovered *in flagrante delicto*. At first he pretended absent-mindedness; then he made no response to the seductive advances by which the

countess seemed to say, "Do you love me to-night?" and the more dreamy and silent he seemed, the more pressing and provocative the countess became.

While Martial danced, Montcornet went from group to group seeking information as to the fair unknown. After exhausting all such resources in vain, he was thinking to profit by a moment when Madame de Gondreville seemed at liberty, and question her as to the name of the mysterious woman, when he noticed a slight opening, an empty space, between the column which held the candelabrum and the adjoining sofa. He seized the opportunity of a new dance to thread his way through the empty chairs which formed, as it were, a fortification defended by the mothers and the women of a certain age. He complimented the dowagers as he went along, and from woman to woman, and flattery to flattery, he reached, at last, the empty place his quick eye had seen beside the unknown lady. At the risk of being clawed by the griffins of the candelabrum he maintained that position to Martial's great displeasure. Too worldly wise to address at once the little blue lady, who was on his right, the colonel began operations by remarking to a tall and rather plain lady who sat on his left:—

"This, madame, has been a very fine ball! What luxury! So lively! On my honor, all the women present are handsome. If you are not dancing it must be that you don't like it."

This insipid conversation begun by the colonel had, of course, no other object than that of drawing into it his right-hand neighbor, who, silent and preoccupied, paid not the slightest attention to him. The officer held

in reserve a number of phrases which he meant to end with, "And you, madame?" on which he counted much. But he was strangely surprised, on looking round, to see tears in the lady's eyes, which appeared to be fastened on Madame de Vaudremont.

"Madame is, no doubt, married?" he ventured, presently, to say, in a hesitating voice.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the lady.

"And your husband is here?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Then why, madame, if I may ask, do you stay in this one place? Is it from coquetry?"

The lady smiled rather sadly.

"Grant me the honor of the next quadrille, and I will certainly not bring you back to this seat," said the colonel. "I see an empty sofa now near the fireplace; let us take it. When the mania of the day is for royalty, why should you abdicate the rank of queen of this ball to which your beauty entitles you?"

"Monsieur, I shall not dance."

The curt responses of the lady were so discouraging that the colonel began to think he should be forced to abandon the position. Martial, who guessed his request and the refusal he received, began to laugh and to stroke his chin with a hand on which the ring he wore shone brilliantly.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Madame de Vaudremont.

"The poor colonel's failure; he has just made such a fiasco!"

"I asked you to take off that ring," said the countess, suddenly interrupting him.

"I did n't hear you."

"If you can't hear, I observe that you can see everything, Monsieur le comte," retorted Madame de Vaudremont, in a piqued tone.

"There's a young man who is wearing a very fine diamond," said the little blue lady, suddenly addressing the colonel.

"Magnificent!" he replied. "That young man is the Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon, one of my most intimate friends."

"Thank you for telling me his name," she replied. "He seems very amiable."

"Yes, but rather thoughtless."

"One might almost think he was on close terms with Madame de Vaudremont," she said, in a questioning tone, and looking into the colonel's eyes, interrogatively.

"On the very closest," he replied.

The lady turned pale.

"Heavens!" thought the soldier, "she really does love that devil of a Martial."

"I thought Madame de Vaudremont was receiving the attentions of the Comte de Soulanges?" resumed the young woman, recovering, apparently, from the inward emotion which had paled her cheek.

"Yes, but the countess has been deserting him of late. You must have noticed poor Soulanges when he came in with her just now; he tries hard not to believe in her desertion."

"I saw him," said the blue lady; then she added, "I thank you," in a tone of voice equivalent to a dismissal.

At this moment the quadrille was just coming to an end, and the colonel, disappointed, had only time to beat a retreat, muttering to himself by way of consolation, "Well, at any rate, she is married."

"Ha, ha, courageous cuirassier," cried Martial, dragging the colonel to a window to breathe some fresh air. "How far have you advanced, hey?"

"She is married, my dear fellow."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"The deuce! why, I'm a moral man," replied the colonel. "I only take an interest in women I can marry. Besides, Martial, she notified me, formally, that she did not dance."

"Colonel, will you bet your dapple-gray horse against one hundred napoleons that she will not dance this evening with me?"

"Yes, that I will!" cried the colonel, striking his hand into that of the dandy. "Meantime I'll see Soulanges; I think he must know the little lady, for she seems to take an interest in him."

"Ah! my old fellow, you've lost," cried Martial, laughing. "My eyes have met hers; and I know what is what. Dear colonel, you won't be vexed with me if I dance with her after she refused you?"

"No, no! he laughs well who laughs last. I'm a bold player, and a good enemy. I'll give you a hint, Martial, that she likes diamonds."

As he said this, the two friends parted. Montcornet went toward the card-room, where he saw the Comte de Soulanges sitting at a *bouillotte* table. Though nothing existed between the two colonels more than the ordinary friendship of soldiers, based on the

perils of war and the duties of their profession, the colonel of cuirassiers was painfully affected on seeing the colonel of artillery engaged in an occupation which might ruin him. Piles of gold and bank-notes showed the fury of the game. A circle of silent men surrounded the players at the table. Certain words like "pass; play; hold; a thousand louis; held," echoed about the room, but to look at the five persons motionless at the table, a spectator would have said that their lips had not moved, and they had spoken with their eyes only.

When the colonel, alarmed at the count's paleness, approached him, he was winning. The Maréchal Duc d'Isomberg, and Keller the celebrated banker rose from the table completely stripped. Soulanges became still more gloomy as he gathered in the mass of gold and notes, which he did not count; a bitter disdain seemed to curl his lip, as if he threatened fortune rather than thanked her for such favors.

"Courage," said the colonel; "courage, Soulanges."

Then, thinking to do him a true service by enticing him away from the card-table, he added: "Come, I've some good news to tell you — but on one condition."

"What condition?" asked Soulanges.

"That of answering a question I shall ask you."

The count rose abruptly, tied his winnings carelessly in the handkerchief he had been twisting convulsively, and joined the colonel. His face was so savage that none of the other players dared complain that he left them. Their own faces even expanded as soon as the sulky and sullen head was removed from the luminous circle which a *bouillotte* lamp casts upon a table.

"Those devils of soldiers understand each other like thieves at a fair," said a diplomatist, in a low voice, taking the count's seat.

"My dear Soulanges," said Montcornet, drawing the count into a corner, "the Emperor praised you very much this morning, and your promotion to the marshalship is beyond a doubt."

"The master does n't like the artillery."

"No; but he adores nobility, and you are a *ci-devant*! The master," continued Montcornet, "said that those who had married in Paris during the campaign were not to be considered as under a cloud. Well?"

The count seemed not to understand this speech.

"Now, in return for all that," resumed the colonel, "I want you to tell me if you know a charming little woman who is sitting over there by the candelabrum."

At these words the count's eyes flashed, and he seized the colonel's hand with extreme violence.

"My dear general," he said, in a voice that was noticeably changed, "if any man but you had asked me that question I would have split his skull with this mass of gold. Leave me, I entreat. I have more desire to blow out my brains than to — I hate everything, and every one. I am going. This gayety, this music, this crowd of stupid laughing faces kill me —"

"My poor friend!" said Montcornet, in a gentle voice, "you are excited. What will you say if I tell you that Martial cares so little for Madame de Vaudremont that he has fallen in love with that little lady in blue?"

"If he speaks to her," cried Soulanges, stuttering

with rage, "I'll make him as flat as his own portfolio, whether he's in the Emperor's inner circle or not."

So saying, the count dropped, as if annihilated, on the sofa to which the colonel had brought him. The latter slowly withdrew; he saw that Soulanges was a prey to anger much too violent for the talk or jests of a mere acquaintance to calm him.

When Montcornet re-entered the great ball-room, Madame de Vaudremont was the first person on whom his eyes rested, and he noticed on her face, usually very calm, the unmistakable signs of an ill-disguised agitation; a chair being vacant beside her, the colonel sat down in it.

"I'll wager that you are annoyed," he said.

"A mere trifle, general. I wanted to get away from here; I have promised to be at the ball of the Grand-duchess of Berg, and I must go first to the Princesse de Wagram. Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon, who knows that, and whom I asked to escort me, is amusing himself with gallant speeches to those dowagers."

"That is not altogether the subject of your annoyance. I'll bet a hundred louis that you will stay here the rest of the evening."

"Oh! what impertinence!"

"So I'm right, am I?"

"Well, well; then tell me what I *am* thinking of," said the countess, giving a little tap with her fan on the colonel's fingers. "I am capable of rewarding you if you guess right."

"I can't accept that challenge, for I am too sure that I am right."

"What presumption!"

"You dislike seeing Martial at the feet of —"

"Of whom?" asked the countess, affecting surprise.

"That candelabrum," replied the colonel, motioning toward the beautiful unknown, and looking at the countess with embarrassing attention.

"You've guessed right," replied the coquettish creature, hiding her face behind her fan, with which she began to play. "Madame de Lansac, who, as you know, is as malicious as an old monkey," she continued, after a moment's silence, "has just told me that Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon runs serious danger in courting that mysterious lady, who has appeared here to-night like a kill-joy. I'd rather see death itself than that face as cruelly pale and beautiful as a vision. I am convinced she is my evil genius. Madame de Lansac," she continued, after making a gesture of annoyance, "who goes to a ball to spy upon every one while pretending to be half asleep, has made me very uneasy. Martial shall pay dear for the game he is playing with me. Advise him, colonel, inas-much as he is your friend, not to trouble me in this way."

"I have just seen a man who proposes to do nothing less than blow out Martial's brains if he says a word to the little blue lady. But I know Martial; such dangers only encourage him. Besides, there's something else; he and I have bet —"

Here the colonel lowered his voice.

"Is that really true?" asked the countess.

"Upon my honor."

"Thanks, dear colonel," replied Madame de Vaudremont, giving him a glance full of coquetry.

“Will you do me the honor to dance with me?”

“Yes, but the second quadrille. While this one is being danced I must find out more about this intrigue; I must know who the little blue lady is. She looks clever.”

The colonel, seeing that Madame de Vaudremont wished to be alone, departed, well satisfied with the manner in which he had opened his attack.

We often meet at balls and parties women like Madame de Lansac, who seem to be there like old mariners standing on a jetty to watch young sailors struggling against the storm. At this moment the old lady, who seemed to take an interest in the personages of our scene, could easily detect the annoyance under which the countess was laboring. That young coquette might flirt her fan graciously, smile on the men who bowed to her, and practise all the tricks a woman employs to hide emotion, but the dowager, one of the most *malicieuses* and perspicacious old duchesses which the eighteenth century had bequeathed to the nineteenth, could read to the bottom of her heart and thought. The old lady seemed to recognize with fellow-feeling the almost imperceptible motions which betrayed the workings of the young woman's soul. The slightest frown upon that pure white brow, the least visible curving of the coral lips were as plainly read by the duchess as the print of a book. From the depth of her sofa, which her gown voluminously filled, this coquette emeritus (though all the while talking with a diplomate who sought her society for the sake of the anecdotes she told so well) was admiring her old self in the charming widow; she

liked her, seeing how well she carried her vexation and the blow to her heart.

Madame de Vaudremont did really feel as much pain as she feigned gayety. She had thought she found in Martial a man of talent, on whom she could rely to embellish her life with the sweets of power. This evening she had seen her mistake, a mistake as injurious to her reputation in society as it was wounding to her self-love. In her, as in all women of that particular period, the suddenness of passions increased their ardor. Souls that live much and fast do not suffer less than those that spend themselves on a single affection. The fancy of the countess for Martial was recent, to be sure, but the most inept of surgeons knows that the amputation of a well limb is more painful than that of a diseased one. There was future ambition to be gratified in her liking for Martial, whereas her preceding coquetry with Soulanges had, of course, no real object, and was rather poisoned by his evident contrition.

The old duchess, who was watching for an opportunity to speak to the countess, now hastened to dismiss her ambassador; for, in presence of quarrelling lovers, all other interests pale, even for an old woman. Madame de Lansac began her attack by casting a most sardonic glance at Madame de Vaudremont, which made the young coquette tremble in dread of seeing her fate in the dowager's hands. There are looks that pass from woman to woman like torches brought upon the stage in the crisis of a tragedy. Persons must have known that old duchess to appreciate the terror which the play of her countenance now inspired in the

countess. Madame de Lansac was tall. Her features made one think, "There's a woman who was handsome in her day." She covered her cheeks with so much rouge that her wrinkles scarcely showed; but her eyes, instead of receiving additional lustre from this mass of carmine, seemed only the more haggard. She wore an enormous number of diamonds, and dressed with enough taste not to seem ridiculous. Her pointed nose was epigrammatic. A set of well-preserved teeth gave to her mouth a sarcastic grin which recalled that of Voltaire. But the exquisite politeness of her manners softened the satirical turn of her ideas so much that she was never accused of actual malignancy.

Her old gray eyes now brightened, and she flung a triumphant look, accompanied by a smile which seemed to say: "I told you so!" across the room to the mysterious beauty sitting beneath the candelabrum, to whose cheek that look brought a flush of hope. This evident alliance between Madame de Lansac and the blue lady could not, of course, escape so practised an eye as that of Madame de Vaudremont, who saw a mystery behind it, which she suddenly resolved to penetrate.

At this moment the Baron de la Roche-Hugon, having questioned all the dowagers without ascertaining the name of the charming unknown, finally appealed in despair to the Comtesse de Gondreville, and received from her the following insufficient reply:—

"That is a lady whom the old Duchesse de Lansac introduced to me."

Turning to the sofa on which sat that ancient lady the master of petitions intercepted the glance of intel-

ligence she cast upon the fair unknown, and, although he stood rather ill in her graces, he determined to accost her. Observing the approach of the lively baron, the duchess smiled with sardonic mischief, and looked at Madame de Vaudremont with an air which made Montcornet, who was watching them, laugh.

"If that old bohemian takes a friendly tone," thought the baron, "she means to play me some ill-natured trick. Madame," he said, "I am told you are here to watch a precious treasure."

"Do you take me for a dragon?" asked the old lady. "But of whom are you speaking?" she added, in a honeyed tone which encouraged Martial.

"Of that little unknown lady whom the jealousy of all these coquettes has hemmed into that corner. You know her family, of course?"

"Yes," replied the duchess; "but what have you to do with a provincial heiress, married a year or two, a girl very well born, whom none of you know, and who never goes into society?"

"Why does n't she dance? She is very handsome. Will you make a treaty of peace with me? If you will deign to tell me all that I want to know, I swear to you that a request for the restitution of the Navarreins woods by the Special Domain shall be warmly urged upon the Emperor."

The younger branch of the house of Navarreins quarters the arms of Lansac, namely: azure cottized argent, flanked with six lance-heads in pale; and the liaison of the old dame with Louis XV. had given her husband the title of duke. Now, inasmuch as the Navarreins had not yet returned to France, the young

master of petitions was proposing nothing less than a piece of treachery to the duchess, by suggesting a claim to property belonging to the elder branch.

"Monsieur," she said, with deceptive gravity, "fetch me the Comtesse de Vaudremont. I promise to reveal to her the mystery that seems to make your unknown lady so interesting. See, the other men in the room are as curious about her as you. All eyes are on that candelabrum near which my *protégée* has modestly placed herself; she is receiving homages that the rest of the women are trying to snatch away from her. Lucky will he be who persuades her to dance with him —"

There she interrupted herself, and empaled the Comtesse de Vaudremont with one of those glances which say so plainly, "We are talking of you." Then she added, "I think you would rather hear the name of the lady from the lips of your beautiful countess than from mine."

The manner of the old duchess was so provocative that Madame de Vaudremont rose and came over to her, taking the chair which Martial offered. Without paying any heed to the young man, she said to the old lady, with a laugh: —

"I can see that you are talking of me; but there my intelligence stops; I don't know whether you are saying good or evil."

Madame de Lansac pressed the young woman's pretty hand in her withered and wrinkled claw as she whispered, in a tone of compassion, "Poor child!"

The two women looked at each other. Madame de Vaudremont perceived that Martial was in the way,

and she dismissed him with a curt and imperious, "Leave us!"

The master of petitions, not at all pleased to see his countess under the influence of the dangerous sybil who had summoned her, gave her one of those masculine looks, all-powerful to a blinded heart, but ridiculous to a woman when she begins to judge the man with whom she has been seriously inclined to fall in love.

"Do you assume to mimic the Emperor?" she said, turning her head half round to give the master of petitions an ironical glance.

Martial had too much knowledge of the world, and too much shrewdness and calculation to risk an open rupture with a woman who stood well at court, and in whose marriage the Emperor took an interest. He counted, moreover, on the jealousy he expected to awaken in her as the best means of discovering the reason of her sudden coldness; he therefore departed, the more willingly because a new quadrille was putting everybody in motion. Crossing his arms, he leaned against a console on the opposite side of the room, where he could watch attentively the interview of the two ladies. From time to time, he followed with his eyes the glances they both cast on the blue unknown. Comparing the countess with this new beauty whom mystery was rendering so attractive, the baron fell into a series of those odious calculations which are customary with men of gallantry; he wavered between a fortune to be gained, and a caprice to be satisfied. The reflection of the lights brought out so strongly his vexed and sombre face upon the white moire draperies

which his black hair brushed, that he might have been compared at that moment to an evil genius. From afar an observer would have said: "There 's another poor devil who does n't seem to be amusing himself."

The colonel, on the other hand, his right shoulder resting lightly against the casing of the door between the card-room and the ball-room, was laughing to himself behind his ample moustache. He enjoyed the pleasure of watching the tumult of the ball; he saw a hundred pretty heads swaying to the motions of the dance; he could read on some faces, as on those of the countess and his friend Martial, the secrets of their agitation. Then, turning his head, he asked himself what connection there could be between the gloomy humor of the Comte de Soulanges, still sitting where he left him, and the plaintive little lady on whose face what seemed to be the joys of hope and the agony of involuntary terror appeared alternately. Montcornet stood there like the king of the feast; he obtained in that moving picture a perfect view of society, and he laughed as he gathered in and replied to the self-interested smiles of a hundred brilliant women, — a colonel of the Imperial Guard, a post which carried with it the rank of a brigadier-general, was certainly one of the finest matches in the army.

It was now about midnight. The conversations, play, dance, coquetry, self-interests, mischief-making, and projects had severally reached that pitch of excitement which leads young men to exclaim: "What a fine ball!"

"My dear little angel," Madame de Lansac was

saying to the countess, "you are at an age when I committed many mistakes. I saw you suffering torture just now, and it came into my mind to give you a little advice. To make mistakes at twenty-two is to spoil our future; it is like tearing a gown we intend to put on. My dear, we often don't learn till too late how to wear our gown without either tearing or rumpeling it. Continue, dear heart, to make yourself clever enemies, and let men without principle be your friends, and you'll see what a pretty sort of life you'll lead some day."

"Ah! madame, a woman finds it very difficult to be happy, doesn't she?" exclaimed the countess, vehemently.

"My dear, she should, at your age, know how to choose between pleasures and happiness. You wish to marry Martial, who is neither fool enough to make a good husband nor passionate enough to be a lover. He has debts, my child; he is a man who will squander your fortune; but that would n't signify if he made you happy. He won't make you happy. Don't you see how old he is already. He is a broken man; he is living on his own remains. In three years there'll be nothing left of him. Then he'll take to ambition. He may succeed, but I don't believe it. What is he? A trimmer; who has a wonderful sense of current affairs, and talks agreeably; but he is far too conceited to have real merit; he'll never go far. Look at him! can't you read on his forehead at this very moment that he is not thinking of you as a young and charming woman, but of the two millions which you possess? He does n't love you, my dear;

he calculates you as he would a matter of business. If you want to marry, take an older man who has won the consideration of the world and is half-way on in his career. A widow ought not to make her second marriage a mere love-tale. Mice are not caught in the same trap twice. Now, a new marriage ought to be, in its way, a speculation on your side; you ought, in remarrying, to have a prospect, at least, of being *Madame la maréchale*."

The eyes of both women fixed themselves at that moment, spontaneously, on the noble figure of General Montcornet.

"If, on the other hand, you prefer to play the difficult rôle of a coquette and not marry at all," continued the duchess, with much kindliness, "ah! my poor little girl, you'll know, better than most women, how to heap up the clouds of a tempest and dissipate them. But, I conjure you, never make it your pride and pleasure to disturb the peace of a home, to destroy the union of families, and the happiness of women who are happy. I played that dangerous game, my child. Good God! for a triumph of vanity women will murder the hearts of some poor virtuous creatures, — for there are, in this world, virtuous women, — and create for themselves eternal hatreds. Too late I learned, as the Duke of Alba said, that a salmon is worth a thousand frogs. Believe me, a true love gives far more enjoyment than the ephemeral passions which we like to excite. Well, I came here to-night to preach this to you. Yes, you are the cause of my apparition in this salon, which, if you'll excuse the word, stinks of the populace. In the olden time, my

dear, we might receive such people in a boudoir, but in a salon — fy! Why do you look at me with that astonished air? Now listen to me,” resumed the old lady. “If you want to play with men, endeavor to convulse the hearts of those only whose life is free, those who have no duties to perform. The others never pardon us the wrongs we make them commit. Profit by that maxim of my old experience. Poor Soulanges, for instance, whose head you have turned, and whom for the last few months you have completely intoxicated, heaven knows how! well, do you know what you have been destroying? — his whole life. He has been married two years; he is adored by a charming little creature whom he loves and yet betrays; she lives in tears and bitter silence. Soulanges has moments of the sharpest remorse, all the sharper that he has not found much comfort in his pleasure — you little trickster, you have betrayed him! Well, now come and see your work.”

The old duchess took the hand of the young countess and they both rose.

“See,” said Madame de Lansac, pointing out to her companion by a glance the pale and trembling lady beneath the candelabrum, “that is my great-niece, the Comtesse de Soulanges. She has yielded to my entreaties, and has come here to-night from a saddened home, where the presence of her child is but a feeble consolation of her sorrow. Do you see her? You think her charming? Well, dear heart, think what she might be if happiness and love were glowing in that face that is now fading.”

The countess silently turned away her head, and

seemed lost in grave reflections. The duchess took her to the door of the card-room, and there, having looked within as if seeking some one, she said to the young coquette, in a deep tone of voice, "And there is Soulanges!"

The countess shuddered as she saw in the least-lighted corner of the room the pale, drawn face of the young man lying back on a sofa; the dejection of his attitude and the gloom upon his brow proved only too plainly his inward suffering. The players went and came before him, but he paid no more attention to them than a dead man might. The picture thus presented of the sorrowing wife and the gloomy, dejected husband, parted one from the other in the midst of this fête like two halves of a tree struck by lightning, had something in it that seemed prophetic to the countess; was it the image of a future vengeance? Her heart was not so spoiled as yet that kindness and right feeling were banished from it. She pressed the hand of the old duchess and thanked her with a smile that had a certain childlike charm.

"Dear heart," said the old woman, "remember in future that we can repulse the homage of men as easily as we attract it." Then, as she passed Montcornet, she said, under her breath, "She is yours if you are not a ninny."

The words were whispered in the colonel's ear while the beautiful countess was still absorbed in the compassion inspired by the appearance of Soulanges, whom she really loved sufficiently to wish to make him happy. She began to think of employing the irresistible power of her fascinations to send him back to his wife.

"Oh! how I will preach to him!" she said to Madame de Lansac.

"Do nothing of the kind, my dear!" cried the duchess, regaining her sofa. "Choose a good husband and shut your door to my nephew. Don't even offer him your friendship. Believe me, my child, a woman does not willingly receive from another woman the heart of her husband; she wants to win him back herself. In bringing my niece here I think I gave her an excellent means of regaining her husband's affection. What I ask of you, as your co-operative share, is to fascinate the colonel."

And she nodded in the direction of Martial's friend; the countess laughed.

"Well, madame, do you at last know the name of that mysterious lady?" asked the baron, in a piqued tone, as soon as the countess was alone.

"Yes, I do," said Madame de Vaudremont, looking straight at the master of petitions.

Her face expressed mischief as well as gayety. The smile which flickered on her lips and dimpled her cheek, and the liquid light in her eyes were like the dancing will-o'-the-wisps which decoy a traveller. Martial, thinking himself beloved, fell into that self-satisfied attitude which a man so complacently assumes toward the woman who loves him, and said, with his natural fatuity: —

"You will not be angry with me, will you, if I seem to attach great value to the knowledge of that lady's name?"

"And you must not be angry," replied Madame de Vaudremont, "if I refuse to tell it to you, and forbid

you to make the slightest advance toward that young lady. You might risk your life."

"Madame, to lose your good graces is to lose more than life."

"Martial," said the countess, severely, "that is Madame de Soulanges; the husband will blow your brains out — if you have any."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the dandy; "the husband lets the man who has won your heart go free, but wants to fight him on his wife's account! What a reversal of principle! I entreat you, allow me one dance with that little woman. You will thus gain proof of how little love his icy heart has ever felt for you; for if Soulanges is angry when I dance with his wife after —"

"She is married, I tell you."

"Obstacle the more which I shall have the pleasure of overcoming."

"But she loves her husband."

"Absurd objection!"

"Ah!" said the countess, with a bitter smile, "you men punish us for our faults and our repentances also."

"Don't be angry," said Martial, hastily. "Oh! I entreat you, forgive me. Come, I won't think anything more about her."

"You deserve that I should send you to her now."

"I'm going," said the baron, smiling, "but I shall come back more in love with you than ever. You will see that the prettiest woman in the world can't obtain a heart that belongs to you."

"I see that you want to win the colonel's horse."

"Ah! the traitor," he replied, laughing, and threatening the colonel, who now came up to them, with his finger. But as he yielded his seat to his friend, he said, in a sardonic tone: "Madame, this is a man who has boasted that he can win your good graces in a single evening."

As he walked away he congratulated himself on having stirred up the pride of the countess and spoiled Montcornet's chances; for, in spite of his habitual shrewdness, he had not detected the covert sarcasm of Madame de Vaudremont's remarks to him; and he did not see that she was really making as many steps toward his friend as his friend was taking toward her, though both were unconscious of it.

At the moment when the master of petitions began to hover round the particular candelabrum near which the Comtesse de Soulanges, pale and anxious, and seeming to live in her eyes only, was still sitting, her husband appeared in the doorway, his eyes sparkling with anger. The old duchess, watchful of all, came up to her nephew and asked for his arm to take her to her carriage, pretending to be bored to death, but really anxious to prevent an unpleasant outbreak. Before leaving the room she made a singular sign of intelligence to her niece, motioning to the enterprising baron who was hovering near, — a sign which seemed to say: "Now, then, revenge yourself."

Madame de Vaudremont intercepted that look; a sudden gleam illuminated her mind; she feared she was the dupe of the wily old woman so trained to intrigue.

"That perfidious duchess," she said to herself,

“may have thought it amusing to lecture me while playing some mischievous trick after her kind.”

At this thought Madame de Vaudremont's pride became more interested than even her curiosity in unravelling the threads of the intrigue; and the secret preoccupation of her mind scarcely allowed her to be mistress of herself. The colonel, interpreting to his own advantage the embarrassment visible in the manners and language of the countess, became more and more assiduous and pressing. Old and *blasés* diplomatists who amuse themselves by watching the play of countenances could seldom meet with more intrigues to watch and fathom than in the course of this evening.

The baron at last managed to obtain a seat beside the Comtesse de Soulanges. His eyes wandered furtively over a throat cool as the dew, sweet as a wild-flower. He admired, close at hand, the beauties that surprised him from afar. He saw a tiny foot well shod; he measured with his eye that supple, graceful waist. In those days women made their waists directly beneath their bosoms, in imitation of Greek statues, — a pitiless and fatal fashion for those whose forms were defective. Casting a furtive glance upon that bosom, Martial was enchanted with the perfection of the lady's figure.

“You have not danced once this evening, madame,” he said, in a soft and flattering voice; “not for want of partners, I am very sure.”

“I do not go into society, and I am therefore unknown,” replied Madame de Soulanges, coldly, for she had not comprehended the glance by which her aunt invited her to coquette with the baron.

Martial was at that moment playing with the diamond ring which adorned his left hand. The glitter of the stones seemed to send a sudden gleam into the soul of the young woman, who colored high and cast an indefinable look upon the baron.

"Do you like dancing?" he said, by way of renewing the conversation.

"Oh! very much, monsieur."

At this strange, eager answer their glances met. The baron, surprised by the tones of her voice, which roused a vague hope in his heart, now questioned the eyes of the young lady.

"Then, madame, I trust it is not temerity on my part to ask to be your partner in the next quadrille."

An artless confusion colored the white cheeks of the pretty countess.

"But, monsieur, I have just refused a gentleman, a soldier—"

"Was it that tall colonel of cuirassiers you see over there?"

"Precisely."

"Oh! he is my best friend; you need fear nothing. Will you grant me the favor I have asked?"

"Yes, monsieur."

The tones of her voice revealed so strong and sudden an emotion that even the master of petitions was startled. He felt reduced to the timidity of a school-boy, he lost his cool assurance, his Southern brain flared up, he tried to speak, but his words seemed to him awkward compared with the sparkling repartees of Madame de Soulanges. It was lucky for him that the quadrille soon began. Standing beside his beauti-

ful partner he grew more at his ease. To many men dancing is a method of action; they think that by displaying the graces of their figure they affect the hearts of women more powerfully than by the charms of their mind. Martial was, no doubt, intending to employ all methods of seduction, judging by the coxcomby of his motions and gestures. He now led his conquest to her place in a certain quadrille to which the most distinguished women in the room attached a fanciful importance, preferring it to all others. While the orchestra performed the prelude to the opening figure, the baron looked about him with incredible satisfaction to his pride, passing in review all the other ladies of that formidable square, and perceiving that his partner's dress rivalled even that of the Comtesse de Vaudremont, who, by an accident (well-contrived, perhaps), proved to be the *vis-à-vis* of the baron and his blue lady.

The eyes of all the dancers rested for a moment on Madame de Soulanges; a flattering murmur proved that she was the topic of conversation; admiring, and even envious glances came so thickly upon her that, ashamed of a triumph she seemed to decline, the young woman modestly lowered her eyes and blushed, which made her the more attractive. When she raised her white eyelids it was only to look at her intoxicated partner, as if, so he thought, she wished to convey to him the homage she had won and let him know that his was the flattery she preferred. She seemed to give herself up with innocent coquetry to that naïve admiration by which young love begins. When she danced, the spectators might well have believed she

was displaying her graces for Martial only; and, though modest, and new to the manœuvres of salons, she seemed to know, as well as the most practised coquette, how and when to raise her eyes to his, and when to lower them with feigned reserve.

When the rules of a new quadrille invented by the dancer Trénis (to which he gave his name) brought Martial alone in front of Montcornet, he said, laughing: —

“I have won your horse.”

“Yes, but you have lost eighty thousand francs a year,” replied the colonel, with a sign toward Madame de Vaudremont.

“What’s that to me?” said Martial. “Madame de Soulanges compensates for millions.”

By the end of this quadrille much whispering went on from ear to ear. The plainest women moralized with their partners on the dawning intimacy of Martial and the blue lady. The beauties affected surprise at its suddenness. The men declared that they could n’t understand the success of that little master of petitions, in whom, for their parts, they could see nothing attractive. A few indulgent women said it was unreasonable to judge the lady so hastily; it would be most unfortunate for young women if an expressive glance, or a gracefully danced figure were enough to compromise them.

Martial alone knew the extent of his success. In the last figure of the quadrille, when the ladies form the *moulinet*, he was certain that he felt, through the soft and perfumed kid of her glove, the gentle fingers of the young woman replying to his amorous appeal.

"Madame," he said, the moment the dance was over, "pray don't return to that odious corner where you have buried until now your face and your toilet. Is admiration the only return you seek for those splendid jewels which adorn your throat and your exquisitely braided hair? Come and take a turn through the salons to enjoy the ball and your own effect."

Madame de Soulanges followed her partner, who thought she might be more surely won if he succeeded in exhibiting their intimacy. Together they took several turns through the groups that crowded the various salons. The countess, apparently uneasy, always paused a moment before entering each salon, and did not advance until she had cast a glance over all the men who were in it. This fear, which filled the master of petitions with delight, seemed to calm itself when he assured her, "You need not be uneasy; *he* is not there."

Presently they reached the large picture-gallery, in one of the wings of the mansion where supper had been laid for three hundred guests. As the feast was about to begin, Martial drew the countess toward an oval boudoir opening out upon the gardens, where the rarest flowers and a few choice shrubs made a perfumed bower beneath a mass of brilliant blue draperies. The echoes of the ball died away there. Here the countess hesitated, and refused at first to follow the young man; but casting a glance into a mirror on the wall, she probably saw that there were witnesses in the room, for she suddenly changed her mind, and sat down with sufficiently good grace upon an ottoman.

“ ‘What a beautiful diamond!’ she said, with the artless expression of a girl who betrays the temptation that a bauble is to her.”



Gertrude Cam

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Proctor & Gamble

"This room is delightful," she said, looking up at the sky-blue hangings which were roped with pearls.

"All is love and pleasure," murmured the young man, in tones of emotion.

Taking advantage of the half-light to gaze closely at the countess, he saw upon her face an expression of trouble, shyness, and desire which enchanted him. The young woman smiled, and the smile seemed to put an end to a struggle of feelings within her soul; she touched the left hand of her adorer and looked at the ring on which her eyes had already fastened.

"What a beautiful diamond!" she said, with the artless expression of a girl who betrays the temptation that a bauble is to her.

Martial, much moved by the involuntary but intoxicating caress of the countess's hand upon his own, looked at her with eyes as dazzling as the diamond itself.

"Wear it," he said, taking off the ring, "in memory of this celestial hour, and for love of —"

She looked at it with such ecstasy that he kissed her hand.

"Do you give it to me?" she said, in a tone of surprise.

"I would fain give you the whole world."

"You are not jesting?" she continued, in a voice which betrayed her keen satisfaction.

"Will you accept my diamond only?"

"You will not take it back?" she asked.

"Never."

She put the ring upon her finger. Martial, sure of his coming happiness, made a gesture as if to pass

his arm about her waist, but the countess suddenly rose, and said, in a clear voice, without the slightest emotion:—

“Monsieur, I accept this diamond with all the less scruple because it belongs to me.”

The master of petitions was confounded.

“Monsieur de Soulanges took it lately from my dressing-table and told me he had mislaid it.”

“You are wrong, madame,” said Martial, in a piqued tone. “I received it from Madame de Vaudremont.”

“Precisely,” she replied, smiling. “My husband borrowed the ring of me, he gave it to her, and she has given it to you; my ring has travelled, that is all. It can tell me now, perhaps, what I may have ignored,—the secret of pleasing. Monsieur,” she continued, gravely, “if it had not been mine, be assured that I should not have risked so much to recover it; for a young woman is, they say, in danger from your attentions. But,” she added, laughing, and touching a secret spring beneath the diamond, “see, my husband’s hair is still in it.”

So saying, she darted away through the salons with such rapidity that he saw it was useless to attempt to follow her, and, moreover, he was no longer in a mood to continue the adventure. The lady’s laugh was echoed in the room itself, where, ensconced behind two shrubs, the coxcomb now beheld the colonel and Madame de Vaudremont, who were laughing heartily.

“Will you have my horse to run after your conquest?” said the colonel.

The good grace with which the baron accepted the

jests Madame de Vaudremont and Montcornet now rained down upon him, earned him their silence upon this scene, where a charger was won in exchange for a young, and pretty, and wealthy widow.

As the Comtesse de Soulanges was driven home through the space that separates the Chaussée-d'Antin from the faubourg Saint-Germain, where she lived, her soul was filled with the keenest anxiety. Before leaving the hôtel Gondreville, she had gone through all the salons without being able to find either her aunt or her husband, who, as we know, had left the ball before her. Dreadful presentiments now tortured her innocent soul. A silent witness of the sufferings her husband had endured from the day when Madame de Vaudremont attached him to her chariot, she had confidently hoped that a coming repentance would bring him back to her. It was therefore with great repugnance that she agreed to a plan laid by her aunt, Madame de Lansac, and she now feared that in doing so she had committed an irreparable fault. The events of the evening had depressed her candid soul. Alarmed at the gloomy, suffering air of her husband, she was still more alarmed by the beauty of her rival, and the corruption of society which she saw about her. Crossing the pont Royal she flung away the desecrated hair contained in the ring once given as the pledge of a pure love. She wept as she recalled the sufferings she had lived through for months, and shuddered at the thought of a wife's duty which requires her, if she would retain the peace of her home, to bury in her heart, without uttering a complaint, the cruel agony she was now enduring.

"Alas!" she thought, "how should women act who love their husbands? Where is the source of their peace of mind? I do not believe, as my aunt tells me, that mere reason is sufficient to support them under such a trial."

She sighed as the chasseur let down the steps of the carriage, from which she sprang into the vestibule of her house. Thence she ran quickly upstairs; but when she reached her room she trembled in every limb on seeing her husband sitting by the fireplace, and evidently waiting for her.

"Since when, my dear," he said, in a high and strained voice, "have you thought it right to go to a ball without letting me know of your intention. Let me tell you that a wife is out of place in public unless accompanied by her husband. You compromised yourself strangely in that dark corner where you chose to put yourself."

"Oh! my good Léon," she said, in a caressing voice, her eyes sparkling with satisfaction, "I couldn't resist the pleasure of seeing you without your seeing me. My aunt took me to the ball; and I have been very happy there."

These words disarmed the jealous anger of the count; all the more because he had been making some bitter reproaches to himself while dreading his wife's return. No doubt, he thought, she was informed at the ball of an infidelity he had hoped to conceal from her knowledge, and, like other lovers, he rushed into jealousy himself, hoping to be the first to cast reproaches, and so evade the blame that was justly due to him. He now looked silently at his wife, who, in her brilliant

evening dress, seemed to him more beautiful than ever; and the thought brought a smile to his face. Happy in that smile, and glad to find her husband in a room where, of late, he had come but seldom, the countess looked at him tenderly. This clemency so enraptured Soulanges, coming, as it did, after the tortures he had gone through at the ball, that he seized his wife's hand and kissed it gratefully; how often we find true gratitude in love!

"Hortense, what is that on your finger that scratched my lip?" he said, laughing.

"That," she said, "is my diamond ring, "which you said was lost, but which I have recovered."

General Montcornet did not marry Madame de Vaudremont. in spite of the good understanding established between them in the course of this evening, for the countess was one of the victims of that dreadful conflagration which made the ball of the Austrian ambassador, on the occasion of Napoleon's marriage with the Archduchess Maria-Louisa, forever celebrated.

THE END.

THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

BY H. DE BALZAC

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE

A DAUGHTER OF EVE
A COMMISSION IN LUNACY
THE RURAL BALL



Madame du Tillet and Madame de Vandenesse.

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TO MADAME LA COMTESSE BOLOGNINI,
NÉE VIMERCATI.

IF you remember, madame, the pleasure your conversation gave to a traveller by recalling Paris to his memory in Milan, you will not be surprised to find him testifying his gratitude for many pleasant evenings passed beside you by laying one of his works at your feet, and begging you to protect it with your name, as in former days that name protected the tales of an ancient writer dear to the Milanese.

You have an Eugénie, already beautiful, whose intelligent smile gives promise that she has inherited from you the most precious gifts of womanhood, and who will certainly enjoy during her childhood and youth all those happinesses which a rigid mother denied to the Eugénie of these pages. Though Frenchmen are taxed with inconstancy, you will find me Italian in faithfulness and memory. While writing the name of "Eugénie," my thoughts have often led me back to that cool stuccoed salon and little garden in the Vicolo dei Cappucini, which echoed to the laughter of that dear child, to our sportive quarrels and our chatter. But you have left the Corso for the Tre Monasteri, and I know not how you are placed there; consequently, I am forced to think of you, not among the charming things with which no doubt you have surrounded yourself, but like one of those fine figures due to Raffaello, Titian, Correggio, Allori, which seem abstractions, so distant are they from our daily lives.

If this book should wing its way across the Alps, it will prove to you the lively gratitude and respectful friendship of

Your devoted servant,

DE BALZAC.

A DAUGHTER OF EVE.

I.

THE TWO MARIES.

IN one of the finest houses of the rue Neuve-des-Mathurins, at half-past eleven at night, two young women were sitting before the fireplace of a boudoir hung with blue velvet of that tender shade, with shimmering reflections, which French industry has lately learned to fabricate. Over the doors and windows were draped soft folds of blue cashmere, the tint of the hangings, the work of one of those upholsterers who have just missed being artists. A silver lamp studded with turquoise, and suspended by chains of beautiful workmanship, hung from the centre of the ceiling. The same system of decoration was followed in the smallest details, and even to the ceiling of fluted blue silk, with long bands of white cashmere falling at equal distances on the hangings, where they were caught back by ropes of pearl. A warm Belgian carpet, thick as turf, of a gray ground with blue posies, covered the floor. The furniture, of carved ebony, after a fine model of the old school, gave substance and richness to the rather too decorative quality, as a painter might call it, of the rest of the room. On either side of a large window, two

étagères displayed a hundred precious trifles, flowers of mechanical art brought into bloom by the fire of thought. On a chimney-piece of slate-blue marble were figures in old Dresden, shepherds in bridal garb, with delicate bouquets in their hands, German fantasticalities surrounding a platinum clock, inlaid with arabesques. Above it sparkled the brilliant facets of a Venice mirror framed in ebony, with figures carved in relief, evidently obtained from some former royal residence. Two jardinières were filled with the exotic product of a hot-house, pale, but divine flowers, the treasures of botany.

In this cold, orderly boudoir, where all things were in place as if for sale, no sign existed of the gay and capricious disorder of a happy home. At the present moment, the two young women were weeping. Pain seemed to predominate. The name of the owner, Ferdinand du Tillet, one of the richest bankers in Paris, is enough to explain the luxury of the whole house, of which this boudoir is but a sample.

Though without either rank or station, having pushed himself forward, heaven knows how, du Tillet had married, in 1831, the daughter of the Comte de Granville, one of the greatest names in the French magistracy, — a man who became peer of France after the revolution of July. This marriage of ambition on du Tillet's part was brought about by his agreeing to sign an acknowledgment in the marriage contract of a dowry not received, equal to that of her elder sister, who was married to Comte Félix de Vandenesse. On the other hand, the Granvilles obtained the alliance with de Vandenesse by the largeness of the *dot*. Thus

the bank repaired the breach made in the pocket of the magistracy by rank. Could the Comte de Vandenesse have seen himself, three years later, the brother-in-law of a Sieur Ferdinand *du* Tillet, so-called, he might not have married his wife; but what man of rank in 1828 foresaw the strange upheavals which the year 1830 was destined to produce in the political condition, the fortunes, and the customs of France? Had any one predicted to Comte Félix de Vandenesse that his head would lose the coronet of a peer, and that of his father-in-law acquire one, he would have thought his informant a lunatic.

Bending forward on one of those low chairs then called *chauffeuses*, in the attitude of a listener, Madame du Tillet was pressing to her bosom with maternal tenderness, and occasionally kissing, the hand of her sister, Madame Félix de Vandenesse. Society added the baptismal name to the surname, in order to distinguish the countess from her sister-in-law, the Marquise Charles de Vandenesse, wife of the former ambassador, who had married the widow of the Comte de Kergarquet, Mademoiselle Émilie de Fontaine.

Half lying on a sofa, her handkerchief in the other hand, her breathing choked by repressed sobs, and with tearful eyes, the countess had been making confidences such as are made only from sister to sister when two sisters love each other; and these two sisters did love each other tenderly. We live in days when sisters married into such antagonist spheres can very well not love each other, and therefore the historian is bound to relate the reasons of this tender affection,

preserved without spot or jar in spite of their husbands' contempt for each other and their own social disunion. A rapid glance at their childhood will explain the situation.

Brought up in a gloomy house in the Marais, by a woman of narrow mind, a *dévôte* who, being sustained by a sense of duty (sacred phrase!), had fulfilled her tasks as a mother religiously, Marie-Angélique and Marie Eugénie de Granville reached the period of their marriage — the first at eighteen, the second at twenty years of age — without ever leaving the domestic zone where the rigid maternal eye controlled them. Up to that time they had never been to a play; the churches of Paris were their theatre. Their education in their mother's house had been as rigorous as it would have been in a convent. From infancy they had slept in a room adjoining that of the Comtesse de Granville, the door of which stood always open. The time not occupied by the care of their persons, their religious duties and the studies considered necessary for well-bred young ladies, was spent in needlework done for the poor, or in walks like those an Englishwoman allows herself on Sunday, saying, apparently, "Not so fast, or we shall seem to be amusing ourselves."

Their education did not go beyond the limits imposed by confessors, who were chosen by their mother from the strictest and least tolerant of the Jansenist priests. Never were girls delivered over to their husbands more absolutely pure and virgin than they; their mother seemed to consider that point, essential as indeed it is, the accomplishment of all her duties toward earth and heaven. These two poor creatures

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had never, before their marriage, read a tale, or heard of a romance; their very drawings were of figures whose anatomy would have been masterpieces of the impossible to Cuvier, designed to feminize the Farnese Hercules himself. An old maid taught them drawing. A worthy priest instructed them in grammar, the French language, history, geography, and the very little arithmetic it was thought necessary in their rank for women to know. Their reading, selected from authorized books, such as the "*Lettres Édifiantes*," and Noël's "*Leçons de Littérature*," was done aloud in the evening; but always in presence of their mother's confessor, for even in those books there did sometimes occur passages which, without wise comments, might have roused their imagination. Fénelon's "*Télémaque*" was thought dangerous.

The Comtesse de Granville loved her daughters sufficiently to wish to make them angels after the pattern of Marie Alacoque, but the poor girls themselves would have preferred a less virtuous and more amiable mother. This education bore its natural fruits. Religion, imposed as a yoke and presented under its sternest aspect, wearied with formal practice these innocent young hearts, treated as sinful. It repressed their feelings, and was never precious to them, although it struck its roots deep down into their natures. Under such training the two Mariés would either have become mere imbeciles, or they must necessarily have longed for independence. Thus it came to pass that they looked to marriage as soon as they saw anything of life and were able to compare a few ideas. Of their own tender graces and their personal

value they were absolutely ignorant. They were ignorant, too, of their own innocence; how, then, could they know life? Without weapons to meet misfortune, without experience to appreciate happiness, they found no comfort in the maternal jail, all their joys were in each other. Their tender confidences at night in whispers, or a few short sentences exchanged if their mother left them for a moment, contained more ideas than the words themselves expressed. Often a glance, concealed from other eyes, by which they conveyed to each other their emotions, was like a poem of bitter melancholy. The sight of a cloudless sky, the fragrance of flowers, a turn in the garden, arm in arm, — these were their joys. The finishing of a piece of embroidery was to them a source of enjoyment.

Their mother's social circle, far from opening resources to their hearts or stimulating their minds, only darkened their ideas and depressed them; it was made up of rigid old women, withered and graceless, whose conversation turned on the differences which distinguished various preachers and confessors, on their own petty indispositions, on religious events insignificant even to the "*Quotidienne*" or "*l'Ami de la Religion*." As for the men who appeared in the Comtesse de Granville's salon, they extinguished any possible torch of love, so cold and sadly resigned were their faces. They were all of the age when mankind is sulky and fretful, and natural sensibilities are chiefly exercised at table and on the things relating to personal comfort. Religious egotism had long dried up those hearts devoted to narrow duties and intrenched behind pious practices. Silent games of cards occu-

pied the whole evening, and the two young girls under the ban of that Sanhedrim enforced by maternal severity, came to hate the dispiriting personages about them with their hollow eyes and scowling faces.

On the gloom of this life one sole figure of a man, that of a music-master, stood vigorously forth. The confessors had decided that music was a Christian art, born of the Catholic Church and developed within her. The two Maries were therefore permitted to study music. A spinster in spectacles, who taught singing and the piano in a neighboring convent, wearied them with exercises; but when the eldest girl was ten years old, the Comte de Granville insisted on the importance of giving her a master. Madame de Granville gave all the value of conjugal obedience to this needed concession, — it is part of a *dévoté's* character to make a merit of doing her duty.

The master was a Catholic German; one of those men born old, who seem all their lives fifty years of age even at eighty. And yet, his brown, sunken, wrinkled face still kept something infantile and artless in its dark creases. The blue of innocence was in his eyes, and a gay smile of springtide abode upon his lips. His iron-gray hair, falling naturally like that of the Christ in art, added to his ecstatic air a certain solemnity which was absolutely deceptive as to his real nature; for he was capable of committing any silliness with the most exemplary gravity. His clothes were a necessary envelope, to which he paid not the slightest attention, for his eyes looked too high among the clouds to concern themselves with such materialities. This great unknown artist belonged to

the kindly class of the self-forgetting, who give their time and their soul to others, just as they leave their gloves on every table and their umbrella at all doors. His hands were of the kind that are dirty as soon as washed. In short, his old body, badly poised on its knotty old legs, proving to what degree a man can make it the mere accessory of his soul, belonged to those strange creations which have been properly depicted only by a German, — by Hoffmann, the poet of that which seems not to exist but yet has life.

Such was Schmucke, formerly chapel-master to the Margrave of Anspach; a musical genius, who was now examined by a council of *dévotés*, and asked if he kept the fasts. The master was much inclined to answer, "Look at me!" but how could he venture to joke with pious dowagers and Jansenist confessors? This apocryphal old fellow held such a place in the lives of the two Maries, they felt such friendship for the grand and simple-minded artist, who was happy and contented in the mere comprehension of his art, that after their marriage, they each gave him an annuity of three hundred francs a year, — a sum which sufficed to pay for his lodging, beer, pipes, and clothes. Six hundred francs a year and his lessons put him in Eden. Schmucke had never found courage to confide his poverty and his aspirations to any but these two adorable young girls, whose hearts were blooming beneath the snow of maternal rigor and the ice of devotion. This fact explains Schmucke and the girlhood of the two Maries.

No one knew then, or later, what abbé or pious spinster had discovered the old German then vaguely

wandering about Paris, but as soon as mothers of families learned that the Comtesse de Granville had found a music-master for her daughters, they all inquired for his name and address. Before long, Schmucke had thirty pupils in the Marais. This tardy success was manifested by steel buckles to his shoes, which were lined with horse-hair soles, and by a more frequent change of linen. His artless gayety, long suppressed by noble and decent poverty, reappeared. He gave vent to witty little remarks and flowery speeches in his German-Gallic patois, very observing and very quaint and said with an air which disarmed ridicule. But he was so pleased to bring a laugh to the lips of his two pupils, whose dismal life his sympathy had penetrated, that he would gladly have made himself wilfully ridiculous had he failed in being so by nature.

According to one of the nobler ideas of religious education, the young girls always accompanied their master respectfully to the door. There they would make him a few kind speeches, glad to do anything to give him pleasure. Poor things! all they could do was to show him their womanhood. Until their marriage, music was to them another life within their lives, just as, they say, a Russian peasant takes his dreams for reality and his actual life for a troubled sleep. With the instinct of protecting their souls against the pettiness that threatened to overwhelm them, against the all-pervading asceticism of their home, they flung themselves into the difficulties of the musical art, and spent themselves upon it. Melody, harmony, and composition, three daughters of heaven, whose choir

was led by an old German-Catholic faun drunk with music, were to these poor girls the compensation of their trials; they made them, as it were, a rampart against their daily lives. Mozart, Beethoven, Gluck, Paësiello, Cimarosa, Haydn, and certain secondary geniuses, developed in their souls a passionate emotion which never passed beyond the chaste inclosure of their breasts, though it permeated that other creation through which, in spirit, they winged their flight. When they had executed some great work in a manner that their master declared was almost faultless, they embraced each other in ecstasies and the old man called them his Saint Ceciliæ.

The two Mariæ were not taken to a ball until they were sixteen years of age, and then only four times a year in special houses. They were not allowed to leave their mother's side without instructions as to their behavior with their partners; and so severe were these instructions that they dared say only yes or no during a dance. The eye of the countess never left them, and she seemed to know from the mere movement of their lips the words they uttered. Even the ball-dresses of these poor little things were piously irreproachable; their muslin gowns came up to their chins with an endless number of thick ruffles, and the sleeves came down to their wrists. Swathing in this way their natural charms, this costume gave them a vague resemblance to Egyptian hermæ; though from these blocks of muslin rose enchanting little heads of tender melancholy. They felt themselves the objects of pity, and inwardly resented it. What woman, however innocent, does not desire to excite envy?

No dangerous idea, unhealthy or even equivocal, soiled the pure pulp of their brain; their hearts were innocent, their hands were horribly red, and they glowed with health. Eve did not issue more innocent from the hands of God than these two girls from their mother's home when they went to the mayor's office and the church to be married, after receiving the simple but terrible injunction to obey in all things two men with whom they were henceforth to live and sleep by day and by night. To their minds, nothing could be worse in the strange houses where they were to go than the maternal convent.

Why did the father of these poor girls, the Comte de Granville, a wise and upright magistrate (though sometimes led away by politics), refrain from protecting the helpless little creatures from such crushing despotism? Alas! by mutual understanding, about ten years after marriage, he and his wife were separated while living under one roof. The father had taken upon himself the education of his sons, leaving that of the daughters to the wife. He saw less danger for women than for men in the application of his wife's oppressive system. The two Maries, destined as women to endure tyranny, either of love or marriage, would be, he thought, less injured than boys, whose minds ought to have freer play, and whose manly qualities would deteriorate under the powerful compression of religious ideas pushed to their utmost consequences. Of four victims the count saved two.

The countess regarded her sons as too ill-trained to admit of the slightest intimacy with their sisters. All communication between the poor children was

therefore strictly watched. When the boys came home from school, the count was careful not to keep them in the house. The boys always breakfasted with their mother and sisters, but after that the count took them off to museums, theatres, restaurants, or, during the summer season, into the country. Except on the solemn days of some family festival, such as the countess's birthday or New Year's day, or the day of the distribution of prizes, when the boys remained in their father's house and slept there, the sisters saw so little of their brothers that there was absolutely no tie between them. On those days the countess never left them for an instant alone together. Calls of "Where is Angélique?" — "What is Eugénie about?" — "Where are my daughters?" resounded all day. As for the mother's sentiments toward her sons, the countess raised to heaven her cold and macerated eyes, as if to ask pardon of God for not having snatched them from iniquity.

Her exclamations, and also her reticences on the subject of her sons, were equal to the most lamenting verses in Jeremiah, and completely deceived the sisters, who supposed their sinful brothers to be doomed to perdition.

When the boys were eighteen years of age, the count gave them rooms in his own part of the house, and sent them to study law under the supervision of a solicitor, his former secretary. The two Mariés knew nothing therefore of fraternity, except by theory. At the time of the marriage of the sisters, both brothers were practising in provincial courts, and both were detained by important cases. Domestic life in many

families which might be expected to be intimate, united, and homogeneous, is really spent in this way. Brothers are sent to a distance, busy with their own careers, their own advancement, occupied, perhaps, about the good of the country; the sisters are engrossed in a round of other interests. All the members of such a family live disunited, forgetting one another, bound together only by some feeble tie of memory, until, perhaps, a sentiment of pride or self-interest either joins them or separates them in heart as they already are in fact. Modern laws, by multiplying the family by the family, has created a great evil, — namely, individualism.

In the depths of this solitude where their girlhood was spent, Angélique and Eugénie seldom saw their father, and when he did enter the grand apartment of his wife on the first floor, he brought with him a saddened face. In his own home he always wore the grave and solemn look of a magistrate on the bench. When the little girls had passed the age of dolls and toys, when they began, about twelve, to use their minds (an epoch at which they ceased to laugh at Schmucke) they divined the secret of the cares that lined their father's forehead, and they recognized beneath that mask of sternness the relics of a kind heart and a fine character. They vaguely perceived how he had yielded to the forces of religion in his household, disappointed as he was in his hopes as a husband, and wounded in the tenderest fibres of paternity, — the love of a father for his daughters. Such griefs were singularly moving to the hearts of the two young girls, who were themselves deprived of all tenderness. Some-

times, when pacing the garden between his daughters, with an arm round each little waist, and stepping with their own short steps, the father would stop short behind a clump of trees, out of sight of the house, and kiss them on their foreheads; his eyes, his lips, his whole countenance expressing the deepest commiseration.

"You are not very happy, my dear little girls," he said one day; "but I shall marry you early. It will comfort me to have you leave home."

"Papa," said Eugénie, "we have decided to take the first man who offers."

"Ah!" he cried, "that is the bitter fruit of such a system. They want to make saints, and they make —" he stopped without ending his sentence.

Often the two girls felt an infinite tenderness in their father's "Adieu," or in his eyes, when, by chance, he dined at home. They pitied that father so seldom seen, and love follows often upon pity.

This stern and rigid education was the cause of the marriages of the two sisters welded together by misfortune, as Rita-Christina by the hand of Nature. Many men, driven to marriage, prefer a girl taken from a convent, and saturated with piety, to a girl brought up to worldly ideas. There seems to be no middle course. A man must marry either an educated girl, who reads the newspapers and comments upon them, who waltzes with a dozen young men, goes to the theatre, devours novels, cares nothing for religion, and makes her own ethics, or an ignorant and innocent young girl, like either of the two Maries. Perhaps there may be as much danger with the one

kind as with the other. Yet the vast majority of men who are not so old as Arnolphe, prefer a religious Agnes to a budding Célimène.

The two Maries, who were small and slender, had the same figure, the same foot, the same hand. Eugénie, the younger, was fair-haired, like her mother, Angélique was dark-haired, like the father. But they both had the same complexion, — a skin of the pearly whiteness which shows the richness and purity of the blood, where the color rises through a tissue like that of the jasmine, soft, smooth, and tender to the touch. Eugénie's blue eyes and the brown eyes of Angélique had an expression of artless indifference, of ingenuous surprise, which was rendered by the vague manner with which the pupils floated on the fluid whiteness of the eyeball. They were both well-made; the rather thin shoulders would develop later. Their throats, long veiled, delighted the eye when their husbands requested them to wear low dresses to a ball, on which occasion they both felt a pleasing shame, which made them first blush behind closed doors, and afterwards, through a whole evening in company.

On the occasion when this scene opens, and the eldest, Angélique, was weeping, while the younger, Eugénie, was consoling her, their hands and arms were white as milk. Each had nursed a child, — one a boy, the other a daughter. Eugénie, as a girl, was thought very giddy by her mother, who had therefore treated her with especial watchfulness and severity. In the eyes of that much-feared mother, Angélique, noble and proud, appeared to have a soul so lofty that it would guard itself, whereas, the more lively Eugénie needed

restraint. There are many charming beings misused by fate,— beings who ought by rights to prosper in this life, but who live and die unhappy, tortured by some evil genius, the victims of unfortunate circumstances. The innocent and naturally light-hearted Eugénie had fallen into the hands and beneath the malicious despotism of a self-made man on leaving the maternal prison. Angélique, whose nature inclined her to deeper sentiments, was thrown into the upper spheres of Parisian social life, with the bridle lying loose upon her neck.

II.

A CONFIDENCE BETWEEN SISTERS.

MADAME DE VANDENESSE, Marie-Angélique, who seemed to have broken down under a weight of troubles too heavy for her soul to bear, was lying back on the sofa with bent limbs, and her head tossing restlessly. She had rushed to her sister's house after a brief appearance at the Opera. Flowers were still in her hair, but others were scattered upon the carpet, together with her gloves, her silk pelisse, and muff and hood. Tears were mingling with the pearls on her bosom; her swollen eyes appeared to make strange confidences. In the midst of so much luxury her distress was horrible, and she seemed unable to summon courage to speak.

"Poor darling!" said Madame du Tillet; "what a mistaken idea you have of my marriage if you think that I can help you!"

Hearing this revelation, dragged from her sister's heart by the violence of the storm she herself had raised there, the countess looked with stupefied eyes at the banker's wife; her tears stopped, and her eyes grew fixed.

"Are you in misery as well, my dearest?" she said, in a low voice.

"My griefs will not ease yours."

"But tell them to me, darling; I am not yet too selfish to listen. Are we to suffer together once more, as we did in girlhood?"

"But alas! we suffer apart," said the banker's wife. "You and I live in two worlds at enmity with each other. I go to the Tuileries when you are not there. Our husbands belong to opposite parties. I am the wife of an ambitious banker, — a bad man, my darling; while you have a noble, kind, and generous husband."

"Oh! don't reproach me!" cried the countess. "To understand my position, a woman must have borne the weariness of a vapid and barren life, and have entered suddenly into a paradise of light and love; she must know the happiness of feeling her whole life in that of another; of espousing, as it were, the infinite emotions of a poet's soul; of living a double existence, — going, coming with him in his courses through space, through the world of ambition; suffering with his griefs, rising on the wings of his high pleasures, developing her faculties on some vast stage; and all this while living calm, serene, and cold before an observing world. Ah! dearest, what happiness in having at all hours an enormous interest, which multiplies the fibres of the heart and varies them indefinitely! to feel no longer cold indifference! to find one's very life depending on a thousand trifles! — on a walk where an eye will beam to us from a crowd, on a glance which pales the sun! Ah! what intoxication, dear, to live! to *live* when other women are praying on their knees for emotions that never come to them! Remember, darling, that for this poem of delight there is but a single moment, — youth! In a few years

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winter comes, and cold. Ah! if you possessed these living riches of the heart, and were threatened with the loss of them — ”

Madame du Tillet, terrified, had covered her face with her hands during the passionate utterance of this anthem.

“I did not even think of reproaching you, my beloved,” she said at last, seeing her sister’s face bathed in hot tears. “You have cast into my soul, in one moment, more brands than I have tears to quench. Yes, the life I live would justify to my heart a love like that you picture. Let me believe that if we could have seen each other oftener, we should not now be where we are. If you had seen my sufferings, you must have valued your own happiness the more, and you might have strengthened me to resist my tyrant, and so have won a sort of peace. Your misery is an incident which chance may change, but mine is daily and perpetual. To my husband I am a peg on which to hang his luxury, the sign-post of his ambition, a satisfaction to his vanity. He has no real affection for me, and no confidence. Ferdinand is hard and polished as that bit of marble,” she continued, striking the chimney-piece. “He distrusts me. Whatever I may want for myself is refused before I ask it; but as for what flatters his vanity and proclaims his wealth, I have no occasion to express a wish. He decorates my apartments; he spends enormous sums upon my entertainments; my servants, my opera-box, all external matters are maintained with the utmost splendor. His vanity spares no expense; he would trim his children’s swaddling-clothes with lace if he

could, but he would never hear their cries, or guess their needs. Do you understand me? I am covered with diamonds when I go to court; I wear the richest jewels in society, but I have not one farthing I can use. Madame du Tillet, who, they say, is envied, who appears to float in gold, has not a hundred francs she can call her own. If the father cares little for his child, he cares less for its mother. Ah! he has cruelly made me feel that he bought me, and that in marrying me without a *dot* he was wronged. I might perhaps have won him to love me, but there's an outside influence against it, — that of a woman, who is over fifty years of age, the widow of a notary, who rules him. I shall never be free, I know that, so long as he lives. My life is regulated like that of a queen; my meals are served with the utmost formality; at a given hour I must drive to the Bois; I am always accompanied by two footmen in full dress; I am obliged to return at a certain hour. Instead of giving orders, I receive them. At a ball, at the theatre, a servant comes to me and says: 'Madame's carriage is ready,' and I am obliged to go, in the midst, perhaps, of something I enjoy. Ferdinand would be furious if I did not obey the etiquette he prescribes for his wife; he frightens me. In the midst of this hateful opulence, I find myself regretting the past, and thinking that our mother was kind; she left us the nights when we could talk together; at any rate, I was living with a dear being who loved me and suffered with me: whereas here, in this sumptuous house, I live in a desert."

At this terrible confession the countess caught her sister's hand and kissed it, weeping.

“How, then, can I help you?” said Eugénie, in a low voice. “He would be suspicious at once if he surprised us here, and would insist on knowing all that you have been saying to me. I should be forced to tell a lie, which is difficult indeed with so sly and treacherous a man; he would lay traps for me. But enough of my own miseries; let us think of yours. The forty thousand francs you want would be, of course, a mere nothing to Ferdinand, who handles millions with that fat banker, Baron de Nucingen. Sometimes, at dinner, in my presence, they say things to each other which make me shudder. Du Tillet knows my discretion, and they often talk freely before me, being sure of my silence. Well, robbery and murder on the high-road seem to me merciful compared to some of their financial schemes. Nucingen and he no more mind destroying a man than if he were an animal. Often I am told to receive poor dupes whose fate I have heard them talk of the night before, — men who rush into some business where they are certain to lose their all. I am tempted, like Léonardo in the brigand’s cave, to cry out, ‘Beware!’ But if I did, what would become of me? So I keep silence. This splendid house is a cut-throat’s den! But Ferdinand and Nucingen will lavish millions for their own caprices. Ferdinand is now buying from the other du Tillet family the site of their old castle; he intends to rebuild it and add a forest with large domains to the estate, and make his son a count; he declares that by the third generation the family will be noble. Nucingen, who is tired of his house in the rue Saint-Lazare, is building a palace. His wife is a friend of

mine — Ah!" she cried, interrupting herself, "she might help us; she is very bold with her husband; her fortune is in her own right. Yes, she could save you."

"Dear heart, I have but a few hours left; let us go to her this evening, now, instantly," said Madame de Vandenesse, throwing herself into Madame du Tillet's arms with a burst of tears.

"I can't go out at eleven o'clock at night," replied her sister.

"My carriage is here."

"What are you two plotting together?" said du Tillet, pushing open the door of the boudoir.

He came in showing a torpid face lighted now by a speciously amiable expression. The carpets had dulled his steps and the preoccupation of the two sisters had kept them from noticing the noise of his carriage-wheels on entering the court-yard. The countess, in whom the habits of social life and the freedom in which her husband left her had developed both wit and shrewdness, — qualities repressed in her sister by marital despotism, which simply continued that of their mother, — saw that Eugénie's terror was on the point of betraying them, and she evaded that danger by a frank answer.

"I thought my sister richer than she is," she replied, looking straight at her brother-in-law. "Women are sometimes embarrassed for money, and do not wish to tell their husbands, like Joséphine with Napoleon. I came here to ask Eugénie to do me a service."

"She can easily do that, madame. Eugénie is very rich," replied du Tillet, with concealed sarcasm.

"Is she?" replied the countess, smiling bitterly.

"How much do you want?" asked du Tillet, who was not sorry to get his sister-in-law into his meshes.

"Ah, monsieur! but I have told you already we do not wish to let our husbands into this affair," said Madame de Vandenesse, cautiously, — aware that if she took his money, she would put herself at the mercy of the man whose portrait Eugénie had fortunately drawn for her not ten minutes earlier. "I will come to-morrow and talk with Eugénie."

"To-morrow?" said the banker. "No; Madame du Tillet dines to-morrow with a future peer of France, the Baron de Nucingen, who is to leave me his place in the Chamber of Deputies."

"Then permit her to join me in my box at the Opera," said the countess, without even glancing at her sister, so much did she fear that Eugénie's candor would betray them.

"She has her own box, madame," said du Tillet, nettled.

"Very good; then I will go to hers," replied the countess.

"It will be the first time you have done us that honor," said du Tillet.

The countess felt the sting of that reproach, and began to laugh.

"Well, never mind; you shall not be made to pay anything this time. Adieu, my darling."

"She is an insolent woman," said du Tillet, picking up the flowers that had fallen on the carpet. "You ought," he said to his wife, "to study Madame de Vandenesse. I'd like to see you before the world as

insolent and overbearing as your sister has just been here. You have a silly, bourgeois air which I detest."

Eugénie raised her eyes to heaven as her only answer.

"*Ah ça*, madame! what have you both been talking of?" said the banker, after a pause, pointing to the flowers. "What has happened to make your sister so anxious all of a sudden to go to your opera-box?"

The poor helot endeavored to escape questioning on the score of sleepiness, and turned to go into her dressing-room to prepare for the night; but du Tillet took her by the arm and brought her back under the full light of the wax-candles which were burning in two silver-gilt sconces between fragrant nosegays. He plunged his light eyes into hers and said, coldly:—

"Your sister came here to borrow forty thousand francs for a man in whom she takes an interest, who'll be locked up within three days in a debtor's prison."

The poor woman was seized with a nervous trembling, which she endeavored to repress.

"You alarm me," she said. "But my sister is far too well brought up, and she loves her husband too much to be interested in any man to that extent."

"Quite the contrary," he said, dryly. "Girls brought up as you were, in the constraints and practice of piety, have a thirst for liberty; they desire happiness, and the happiness they get in marriage is never as fine as that they dreamt of. Such girls make bad wives."

"Speak for me," said poor Eugénie, in a tone of

bitter feeling, "but respect my sister. The Comtesse de Vandenesse is happy; her husband gives her too much freedom not to make her truly attached to him. Besides, if your supposition were true, she would never have told me of such a matter."

"It is true," he said, "and I forbid you to have anything to do with the affair. My interests demand that the man shall go to prison. Remember my orders."

Madame du Tillet left the room.

"She will disobey me, of course, and I shall find out all the facts by watching her," thought du Tillet, when alone in the boudoir. "These poor fools always think they can do battle against us."

He shrugged his shoulders and rejoined his wife, or to speak the truth, his slave.

The confidence made to Madame du Tillet by Madame Félix de Vandenesse is connected with so many points of the latter's history for the last six years, that it would be unintelligible without a succinct account of the principal events of her life.

III.

THE HISTORY OF A FORTUNATE WOMAN.

AMONG the remarkable men who owed their destiny to the Restoration, but whom, unfortunately, the restored monarchy kept, with Martignac, aloof from the concerns of government, was Félix de Vandenesse, removed, with several others, to the Chamber of peers during the last days of Charles X. This misfortune, though, as he supposed, temporary, made him think of marriage, towards which he was also led, as so many men are, by a sort of disgust for the emotions of gallantry, those fairy flowers of the soul. There comes a vital moment to most of us when social life appears in all its soberness.

Félix de Vandenesse had been in turn happy and unhappy, oftener unhappy than happy, like men who, at their start in life, have met with Love in its most perfect form. Such privileged beings can never subsequently be satisfied; but, after fully experiencing life, and comparing characters, they attain to a certain contentment, taking refuge in a spirit of general indulgence. No one deceives them, for they delude themselves no longer; but their resignation, their disillusionment is always graceful; they expect what comes, and therefore they suffer less. Félix might still rank among the handsomest and most agreeable men in

Paris. He was originally commended to many women by one of the noblest creatures of our epoch, Madame de Mortsauf, who had died, it was said, out of love and grief for him; but he was specially trained for social life by the handsome and well-known Lady Dudley.

In the eyes of many Parisian women, Félix, a sort of hero of romance, owed much of his success to the evil that was said of him. Madame de Manerville had closed the list of his amorous adventures; and perhaps her dismissal had something to do with his frame of mind. At any rate, without being in any way a Don Juan, he had gathered in the world of love as many disenchantments as he had met with in the world of politics. That ideal of womanhood and of passion, the type of which — perhaps to his sorrow — had lighted and governed his dawn of life, he despaired of ever finding again.

At thirty years of age, Comte Félix determined to put an end to the burden of his various felicities by marriage. On that point his ideas were extremely fixed; he wanted a young girl brought up in the strictest tenets of Catholicism. It was enough for him to know how the Comtesse de Granville had trained her daughters to make him, after he had once resolved on marriage, request the hand of the eldest. He himself had suffered under the despotism of a mother; he still remembered his unhappy childhood too well not to recognize, beneath the reserves of feminine shyness, the state to which such a yoke must have brought the heart of a young girl, whether that heart was soured, embittered, or rebellious, or whether it was still peace-

ful, lovable, and ready to unclose to noble sentiments. Tyranny produces two opposite effects, the symbols of which exist in two grand figures of ancient slavery, Epictetus and Spartacus, — hatred and evil feelings on the one hand, resignation and tenderness, on the other.

The Comte de Vandenesse recognized himself in Marie-Angélique de Granville. In choosing for his wife an artless, innocent, and pure young girl, this young old man determined to mingle a paternal feeling with the conjugal feeling. He knew his own heart was withered by the world and by politics, and he felt that he was giving in exchange for a dawning life the remains of a worn-out existence. Beside those springtide flowers he was putting the ice of winter; hoary experience with young and innocent ignorance. After soberly judging the position, he took up his conjugal career with ample precaution; indulgence and perfect confidence were the two anchors to which he moored it. Mothers of families ought to seek such men for their daughters. A good mind protects like a divinity; disenchantment is as keen-sighted as a surgeon; experience as foreseeing as a mother. Those three qualities are the cardinal virtues of a safe marriage. All that his past career had taught to Félix de Vandenesse, the observations of a life that was busy, literary, and thoughtful by turns, all his forces, in fact, were now employed in making his wife happy; to that end he applied his mind.

When Marie-Angélique left the maternal purgatory, she rose at once into the conjugal paradise prepared for her by Félix, rue du Rocher, in a house where all

things were redolent of aristocracy, but where the varnish of society did not impede the ease and *laissezaller* which young and loving hearts desire so much. From the start, Marie-Angélique tasted all the sweets of material life to the very utmost. For two years her husband made himself, as it were, her purveyor. He explained to her by degrees, and with great art, the things of life; he initiated her slowly into the mysteries of the highest society; he taught her the genealogies of noble families; he showed her the world; he guided her taste in dress; he trained her to converse; he took her from theatre to theatre, and made her study literature and current history. This education he accomplished with all the care of a lover, father, master, and husband; but he did it soberly and discreetly; he managed both enjoyments and instructions in such a manner as not to destroy the value of her religious ideas. In short, he carried out his enterprise with the wisdom of a great master. At the end of four years, he had the happiness of having formed in the Comtesse de Vandenesse one of the most lovable and remarkable young women of our day.

Marie-Angélique felt for Félix precisely the feelings with which Félix desired to inspire her, — true friendship, sincere gratitude, and a fraternal love, in which was mingled, at certain times, a noble and dignified tenderness, such as tenderness between husband and wife ought to be. She was a mother, and a good mother. Félix had therefore attached himself to his young wife by every bond without any appearance of garroting her, — relying for his happiness on the charms of habit.

None but men trained in the school of life — men who have gone round the circle of disillusionment, political and amorous — are capable of following out a course like this. Félix, however, found in his work the same pleasure that painters, writers, architects take in their creations. He doubly enjoyed both the work and its fruition as he admired his wife, so artless, yet so well-informed, witty, but natural, lovable and chaste, a girl, and yet a mother, perfectly free, though bound by the chains of rightness. The history of all good homes is that of prosperous peoples; it can be written in two lines, and has in it nothing for literature. So, as happiness is only explicable to and by itself, these four years furnish nothing to relate which was not as tender as the soft outlines of eternal cherubs, as insipid, alas! as manna, and about as amusing as the tale of “Astrea.”

In 1833, this edifice of happiness, so carefully erected by Félix de Vandenesse, began to crumble, weakened at its base without his knowledge. The heart of a woman of twenty-five is no longer that of a girl of eighteen, any more than the heart of a woman of forty is that of a woman of thirty. There are four ages in the life of woman; each age creates a new woman. Vandenesse knew, no doubt, the law of these transformations (created by our modern manners and morals), but he forgot them in his own case, — just as the best grammarian will forget a rule of grammar in writing a book, or the greatest general on the field under fire, surprised by some unlooked-for change of base, forgets his military tactics. The man who can perpetually bring his thought to bear upon his facts is a

man of genius; but the man of the highest genius does not display genius at all times; if he did, he would be like to God.

After four years of this life, with never a shock to the soul, nor a word that produced the slightest discord in this sweet concert of sentiment, the countess, feeling herself developed like a beautiful plant in a fertile soil, caressed by the sun of a cloudless sky, awoke to a sense of a new self. This crisis of her life, the subject of this Scene, would be incomprehensible without certain explanations, which may extenuate in the eyes of women the wrong-doing of this young countess, a happy wife, a happy mother, who seems, at first sight, inexcusable.

Life results from the action of two opposing principles; when one of them is lacking the being suffers. Vandenesse, by satisfying every need, had suppressed desire, that king of creation, which fills an enormous place in the moral forces. Extreme heat, extreme sorrow, complete happiness, are all despotic principles that reign over spaces devoid of production; they insist on being solitary; they stifle all that is not themselves. Vandenesse was not a woman, and none but women know the art of varying happiness; hence their coquetry, refusals, fears, quarrels, and the all-wise clever foolery with which they put in doubt the things that seemed to be without a cloud the night before. Men may weary by their constancy, but women never. Vandenesse was too thoroughly kind by nature to worry deliberately the woman he loved; on the contrary, he kept her in the bluest and least cloudy heaven of love. The problem of eternal beati-

tude is one of those whose solution is known only to God. Here, below, the sublimest poets have simply harassed their readers when attempting to picture paradise. Dante's reef was that of Vandenesse; all honor to such courage!

Felix's wife began to find monotony in an Eden so well arranged; the perfect happiness which the first woman found in her terrestrial paradise gave her at length a sort of nausea of sweet things, and made the countless wish, like Rivarol reading Florian, for a wolf in the fold. Such, judging by the history of ages, appears to be the meaning of that emblematic serpent to which Eve listened, in all probability, out of ennui. This deduction may seem a little venturesome to Protestants, who take the book of Genesis more seriously than the Jews themselves.

The situation of Madame de Vandenesse can, however, be explained without recourse to Biblical images. She felt in her soul an enormous power that was unemployed. Her happiness gave her no suffering; it rolled along without care or uneasiness; she was not afraid of losing it; each morning it shone upon her, with the same blue sky, the same smile, the same sweet words. That clear, still lake was unruffled by any breeze, even a zephyr; she would fain have seen a ripple on its glassy surface. Her desire had something so infantine about it that it ought to be excused; but society is not more indulgent than the God of Genesis. Madame de Vandenesse, having now become intelligently clever, was aware that such sentiments were not permissible, and she refrained from confiding them to her "dear little husband." Her genuine

simplicity had not invented any other name for him; for one can't call up in cold blood that delightfully exaggerated language which love imparts to its victims in the midst of flames.

Vandenesse, glad of this adorable reserve, kept his wife, by deliberate calculations, in the temperate regions of conjugal affection. He never condescended to seek a reward or even an acknowledgment of the infinite pains which he gave himself; his wife thought his luxury and good taste her natural right, and she felt no gratitude for the fact that her pride and self-love had never suffered. It was thus in everything. Kindness has its mishaps; often it is attributed to temperament; people are seldom willing to recognize it as the secret effort of a noble soul.

About this period of her life, Madame Félix de Vandenesse had attained to a degree of worldly knowledge which enabled her to quit the insignificant rôle of a timid, listening, and observing supernumerary, — a part played, they say, for some time, by Giulia Grisi in the chorus at La Scala. The young countess now felt herself capable of attempting the part of prima-donna, and she did so on several occasions. To the great satisfaction of her husband, she began to mingle in conversations. Intelligent ideas and delicate observations put into her mind by her intercourse with her husband, made her remarked upon, and success emboldened her. Vandenesse, to whom the world admitted that his wife was beautiful, was delighted when the same assurance was given that she was clever and witty. On their return from a ball, concert, or rout where Marie had shone brilliantly,

she would turn to her husband, as she took off her ornaments, and say, with a joyous, self-assured air, —

“Were you pleased with me this evening?”

The countess excited jealousies; among others that of her husband's sister, Madame de Listomère, who until now had patronized her, thinking that she protected a foil to her own merits. A countess, beautiful, witty and virtuous! — what a prey for the tongues of the world! Félix had broken with too many women, and too many women had broken with him, to leave them indifferent to his marriage. When these women beheld in Madame de Vandenesse a small woman with red hands, and rather awkward manner, saying-little, and apparently not thinking much, they thought themselves sufficiently avenged. The disasters of July, 1830, supervened; society was dissolved for two years; the rich evaded the turmoil and left Paris either for foreign travel or for their estates in the country, and none of the salons reopened until 1833. When that time came, the faubourg Saint-Germain still sulked, but it held intercourse with a few houses, regarding them as neutral ground, — among others that of the Austrian ambassador, where the legitimist society and the new social world met together in the persons of their best representatives.

Attached by many ties of the heart and by gratitude to the exiled family, and strong in his personal convictions, Vandenesse did not consider himself obliged to imitate the silly behavior of his party. In times of danger, he had done his duty at the risk of his life; his fidelity had never been compromised, and he determined to take his wife into general soci-

ety without fear of its becoming so. His former mistresses could scarcely recognize the bride they had thought so childish in the elegant, witty, and gentle countess, who now appeared in society with the exquisite manners of the highest female aristocracy. Mesdames d'Espard, de Manerville, and Lady Dudley, with others less known, felt the serpent waking up in the depths of their hearts; they heard the low hissings of angry pride; they were jealous of Félix's happiness, and would gladly have given their prettiest jewel to do him some harm; but instead of being hostile to the countess, these kind, ill-natured women surrounded her, showed her the utmost friendship, and praised her to men. Sufficiently aware of their intentions, Félix watched their relations with Marie, and warned her to distrust them. They all suspected the uneasiness of the count at their intimacy with his wife, and they redoubled their attentions and flatteries, so that they gave her an enormous vogue in society, to the great displeasure of her sister-in-law, the Marquise de Listomère, who could not understand it. The Comtesse Félix de Vandenesse was cited as the most charming and the cleverest woman in Paris. Marie's other sister-in-law, the Marquise Charles de Vandenesse, was consumed with vexation at the confusion of names and the comparisons it sometimes brought about. Though the marquise was a handsome and clever woman, her rivals took delight in comparing her with her sister-in-law, with all the more point because the countess was a dozen years younger. These women knew very well what bitterness Marie's social vogue would bring into her intercourse with both

of her sisters-in-law, who, in fact, became cold and disobliging in proportion to her triumph in society. She was thus surrounded by dangerous relations and intimate enemies.

Every one knows that French literature at that particular period was endeavoring to defend itself against an apathetic indifference (the result of the political drama) by producing works more or less Byronian, in which the only topics really discussed were conjugal delinquencies. Infringements of the marriage tie formed the staple of reviews, books, and dramas. This eternal subject grew more and more the fashion. The lover, that nightmare of husbands, was everywhere, except perhaps in homes, where, in point of fact, under the bourgeois *régime*, he was less seen than formerly. It is not when every one rushes to their window and cries "Thief!" and lights the streets, that robbers abound. It is true that during those years so fruitful of turmoil — urban, political, and moral — a few matrimonial catastrophes took place; but these were exceptional, and less observed than they would have been under the Restoration. Nevertheless, women talked a great deal together about books and the stage, then the two chief forms of poesy. The lover thus became one of their leading topics, — a being rare in point of fact and much desired. The few affairs which were known gave rise to discussions, and these discussions were, as usually happens, carried on by immaculate women.

A fact worthy of remark is the aversion shown to such conversations by women who are enjoying some illicit happiness; they maintain before the eyes of the

world a reserved, prudish, and even timid countenance; they seem to ask silence on the subject, or some condonation of their pleasure from society. When, on the contrary, a woman talks freely of such catastrophes, and seems to take pleasure in doing so, allowing herself to explain the emotions that justify the guilty parties, we may be sure that she herself is at the crossways of indecision, and does not know what road she might take.

During this winter, the Comtesse de Vandenesse heard the great voice of the social world roaring in her ears, and the wind of its stormy gusts blew round her. Her pretended friends, who maintained their reputations at the height of their rank and their positions, often produced in her presence the seductive idea of the lover; they cast into her soul certain ardent talk of love, the *mot d'énigme* which life propounds to woman, the grand passion, as Madame de Staël called it, — preaching by example. When the countess asked naïvely, in a small and select circle of these friends, what difference there was between a lover and a husband, all those who wished evil to Félix took care to reply in a way to pique her curiosity, or fire her imagination, or touch her heart, or interest her mind.

“Oh! my dear, we vegetate with a husband, but we live with a lover,” said her sister-in-law, the marquise.

“Marriage, my dear, is our purgatory; love is paradise,” said Lady Dudley.

“Don’t believe her,” cried Mademoiselle des Touches; “it is hell.”

"But a hell we like," remarked Madame de Rochefide. "There is often more pleasure in suffering than in happiness; look at the martyrs!"

"With a husband, my dear innocent, we live, as it were, in our own life; but to love, is to live in the life of another," said the Marquise d'Espard.

"A lover is forbidden fruit, and that to me, says all!" cried the pretty Moina de Saint-Héren, laughing.

When she was not at some diplomatic rout, or at a ball given by rich foreigners, like Lady Dudley or the Princesse Galathionne, the Comtesse de Vandenesse might be seen, after the Opera, at the houses of Madame d'Espard, the Marquise de Listomère, Mademoiselle des Touches, the Comtesse de Montcornet, or the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, the only aristocratic houses then open; and never did she leave any one of them without some evil seed of the world being sown in her heart. She heard talk of completing her life, — a saying much in fashion in those days; of being comprehended, — another word to which women gave strange meanings. She often returned home uneasy, excited, curious, and thoughtful. She began to find something less, she hardly knew what, in her life; but she did not yet go so far as to think it lonely.

IV.

A CELEBRATED MAN.

THE most amusing society, but also the most mixed, which Madame Félix de Vandenesse frequented, was that of the Comtesse de Montcornet, a charming little woman, who received illustrious artists, leading financial personages, distinguished writers; but only after subjecting them to so rigid an examination that the most exclusive aristocrat had nothing to fear in coming in contact with this second-class society. The loftiest pretensions were there respected.

During the winter of 1833, when society rallied after the revolution of July, some salons, notably those of Mesdames d'Espard and de Listomère, Made-moiselle des Touches, and the Duchesse de Grandlieu, had selected certain of the celebrities in art, science, literature, and politics, and received them. Society can lose nothing of its rights, and it must be amused. At a concert given by Madame de Montcornet toward the close of the winter of 1833, a man of rising fame in literature and politics appeared in her salon, brought there by one of the wittiest, but also one of the laziest writers of that epoch, Émile Blondet, celebrated behind closed doors, highly praised by journalists, but unknown beyond the barriers. Blondet himself was well aware of this; he indulged in no illusions, and,

among his other witty and contemptuous sayings, he was wont to remark that fame is a poison good to take in little doses.

From the moment when the man we speak of, Raoul Nathan, after a long struggle, forced his way to the public gaze, he had put to profit the sudden infatuation for form manifested by those elegant descendants of the middle ages, jestingly called Young France. He assumed the singularities of a man of genius and enrolled himself among those adorers of art, whose intentions, let us say, were excellent; for surely nothing could be more ridiculous than the costume of Frenchmen in the nineteenth century, and nothing more courageous than an attempt to reform it. Raoul, let us do him this justice, presents in his person something fine, fantastic, and extraordinary, which needs a frame. His enemies, or his friends, they are about the same thing, agree that nothing could harmonize better with his mind than his outward form.

Raoul Nathan would, perhaps, be more singular if left to his natural self than he is with his various accompaniments. His worn and haggard face gives him an appearance of having fought with angels or devils; it bears some resemblance to that the German painters give to the dead Christ; countless signs of a constant struggle between failing human nature and the powers on high appear in it. But the lines in his hollow cheeks, the projections of his crooked, furrowed skull, the caverns around his eyes and behind his temples, show nothing weakly in his constitution. His hard membranes, his visible bones are the signs of remarkable solidity; and though his skin,

discolored by excesses, clings to those bones as if dried there by inward fires, it nevertheless covers a most powerful structure. He is thin and tall. His long hair, always in disorder, is worn so for effect. This ill-combed, ill-made Byron has heron legs and stiffened knee-joints, an exaggerated stoop, hands with knotty muscles, firm as a crab's claws, and long, thin, wiry fingers. Raoul's eyes are Napoleonic, blue eyes, which pierce to the soul; his nose is crooked and very shrewd; his mouth charming, embellished with the whitest teeth that any woman could desire. There is fire and movement in the head, and genius on that brow. Raoul belongs to the small number of men who strike your mind as you pass them, and who, in a salon, make a luminous spot to which all eyes are attracted.

He makes himself remarked also by his *négligé*, if we may borrow from Molière the word which Éliante uses to express the want of personal neatness. His clothes always seem to have been twisted, frayed, and crumpled intentionally, in order to harmonize with his physiognomy. He keeps one of his hands habitually in the bosom of his waistcoat in the pose which Girodet's portrait of Monsieur de Chateaubriand has rendered famous; but less to imitate that great man (for he does not wish to resemble any one) than to rumple the over-smooth front of his shirt. His cravat is no sooner put on than it is twisted by the convulsive motions of his head, which are quick and abrupt, like those of a thoroughbred horse impatient of harness, and constantly tossing up its head to rid itself of bit and bridle. His long and pointed beard is

neither combed, nor perfumed, nor brushed, nor trimmed, like those of the elegant young men of society; he lets it alone, to grow as it will. His hair, getting between the collar of his coat and his cravat, lies luxuriantly on his shoulders, and greases whatever spot it touches. His wiry, bony hands ignore a nail-brush and the luxury of lemon. Some of his co-feuilletonists declare that purifying waters seldom touch their calcined skin.

In short, the terrible Raoul is grotesque. His movements are jerky, as if produced by imperfect machinery; his gait rejects all idea of order, and proceeds by spasmodic zig-zags and sudden stoppages, which knock him violently against peaceable citizens on the streets and boulevards of Paris. His conversation, full of caustic humor, of bitter satire, follows the gait of his body; suddenly it abandons its tone of vengeance and turns sweet, poetic, consoling, gentle, without apparent reason; he falls into inexplicable silences, or turns somersets of wit, which at times are somewhat wearying. In society, he is boldly awkward, and exhibits a contempt for conventions and a critical air about things respected which makes him unpleasant to narrow minds, and also to those who strive to preserve the doctrines of old-fashioned, gentlemanly politeness; but for all that there is a sort of lawless originality about him which women do not dislike. Besides, to them, he is often most amiably courteous; he seems to take pleasure in making them forget his personal singularities, and thus obtains a victory over antipathies which flatters either his vanity, his self-love, or his pride.

"Why do you present yourself like that?" said the Marquise de Vandenesse one day.

"Pearls live in oyster-shells," he answered, conceitedly.

To another who asked him somewhat the same question, he replied, —

"If I were charming to all the world, how could I seem better still to the one woman I wish to please?"

Raoul Nathan imports this same natural disorder (which he uses as a banner) into his intellectual life; and the attribute is not misleading. His talent is very much that of the poor girls who go about in bourgeois families to work by the day. He was first a critic, and a great critic; but he felt himself cheated in that vocation. His articles were equal to books, he said. The profits of theatrical work then allured him; but, incapable of the slow and steady application required for stage arrangement, he was forced to associate with himself a vaudevillist, du Bruel, who took his ideas, worked them over, and reduced them into those productive little pieces, full of wit, which are written expressly for actors and actresses. Between them, they had invented Florine, an actress now in vogue.

Humiliated by this association, which was that of the Siamese twins, Nathan had produced alone, at the Théâtre-Français, a serious drama, which fell with all the honors of war amid salvos of thundering articles. In his youth he had once before appeared at the great and noble Théâtre-Français in a splendid romantic play of the style of "Pinto," — a period when the classic reigned supreme. The Odéon was so

violently agitated for three nights that the play was forbidden by the censor. This second piece was considered by many a masterpiece, and won him more real reputation than all his productive little pieces done with collaborators, — but only among a class to whom little attention is paid, that of connoisseurs and persons of true taste.

“Make another failure like that,” said Émile Blondet, “and you’ll be immortal.”

But instead of continuing in that difficult path, Nathan had fallen, out of sheer necessity, into the powder and patches of eighteenth-century vaudeville, costume plays, and the reproduction, scenically, of successful novels.

Nevertheless, he passed for a great mind which had not said its last word. He had, moreover, attempted permanent literature, having published three novels, not to speak of several others which he kept in press like fish in a tank. One of these three books, the first (like that of many writers who can only make one real trip into literature), had obtained a very brilliant success. This work, imprudently placed in the front rank, this really artistic work he was never weary of calling the finest book of the period, the novel of the century.

Raoul complained bitterly of the exigencies of art. He was one of those who contributed most to bring all created work, pictures, statues, books, building under the single standard of ART. He had begun his career by committing a volume of verse, which won him a place in the pleiades of living poets; among these verses was a nebulous poem that was greatly admired.

Forced by want of means to keep on producing, he went from the theatre to the press, and from the press to the theatre, dissipating and scattering his talent, but believing always in his vein. His fame was therefore not unpublished like that of so many great minds in extremity, who sustain themselves only by the thought of work to be done.

Nathan resembled a man of genius; and had he marched to the scaffold, as he sometimes wished he could have done, he might have struck his brow with the famous action of André Chenier. . Seized with political ambition on seeing the rise to power of a dozen authors, professors, metaphysicians, and historians, who incrustated themselves, so to speak, upon the machine during the turmoils of 1830 and 1833, he regretted that he had not spent his time on political instead of literary articles. . He thought himself superior to all those parvenus, whose success inspired him with consuming jealousy. He belonged to the class of minds ambitious of everything, capable of all things, from whom success is, as it were, stolen; who go their way dashing at a hundred luminous points, and settling upon none, exhausting at last the good-will of others.

At this particular time he was going from Saint-Simonism into republicanism, to return, very likely, to ministerialism. He looked for a bone to gnaw in all corners, searching for a safe place where he could bark secure from kicks and make himself feared. But he had the mortification of finding he was held to be of no account by de Marsay, then at the head of the government, who had no consideration whatever for

authors, among whom he did not find what Richelieu called a consecutive mind, or more correctly, continuity of ideas; he counted as any minister would have done on the constant embarrassment of Raoul's business affairs. Sooner or later, necessity would bring him to accept conditions instead of imposing them.

The real, but carefully concealed character of Raoul Nathan is of a piece with his public career. He is a comedian in good faith, selfish as if the State were himself, and a very clever orator. No one knows better how to play off sentiments, glory in false grandeurs, deck himself with moral beauty, do honor to his nature in language, and pose like *Alceste* while behaving like *Philinte*. His egotism trots along protected by this cardboard armor, and often almost reaches the end he seeks. Lazy to a superlative degree, he does nothing, however, until he is prodded by the bayonets of need. He is incapable of continued labor applied to the creation of a work; but, in a paroxysm of rage caused by wounded vanity, or in a crisis brought on by creditors, he leaps the *Eurotas* and attains to some great triumph of his intellect. After which, weary, and surprised at having created anything, he drops back into the *marasmus* of Parisian dissipation; wants become formidable; he has no strength to face them; and then he comes down from his pedestal and compromises.

Influenced by a false idea of his grandeur and of his future, — the measure of which he reckons on the noble success of one of his former comrades, one of the few great talents brought to light by the revolution of July, — he allows himself, in order to get out of his

embarrassments, certain laxities of principle with persons who are friendly to him, — laxities which never come to the surface, but are buried in private life, where no one ever mentions or complains of them. The shallowness of his heart, the impurity of his hand, which clasps that of all vices, all evils, all treacheries, all opinions, have made him as inviolable as a constitutional king. Venial sins, which excite a hue and cry against a man of high character, are thought nothing of in him; the world hastens to excuse them. Men who might otherwise be inclined to despise him shake hands with him, fearing that the day may come when they will need him. He has, in fact, so many friends that he wishes for enemies.

Judged from a literary point of view, Nathan lacks style and cultivation. Like most young men, ambitious of literary fame, he disgorges to-day what he acquired yesterday. He has neither the time nor the patience to write carefully; he does not observe, but he listens. Incapable of constructing a vigorously framed plot, he sometimes makes up for it by the impetuous ardor of his drawing. He “does passion,” to use a term of the literary argot; but instead of awaking ideas, his heroes are simply enlarged individualities, who excite only fugitive sympathies; they are not connected with any of the great interests of life, and consequently they represent nothing. Nevertheless, Nathan maintains his ground by the quickness of his mind, by those lucky hits which billiard-players call a “good stroke.” He is the cleverest shot at ideas on the fly in all Paris. His fecundity is not his own, but that of his epoch; he lives on

chance events, and to control them he distorts their meaning. In short, he is not *true*; his presentation is false; in him, as Comte Félix said, is the born juggler. Moreover, his pen gets its ink in the boudoir of an actress.

Raoul Nathan is a fair type of the Parisian literary youth of the day, with its false grandeurs and its real misery. He represents that youth by his incomplete beauties and his headlong falls, by the turbulent torrent of his existence, with its sudden reverses and its unhopèd-for triumphs. He is truly the child of a century consumed with envy, — a century with a thousand rivalries lurking under many a system, which nourish to their own profit that hydra of anarchy which wants wealth without toil, fame without talent, success without effort, but whose vices force it, after much rebellion and many skirmishes, to accept the budget under the powers that be. When so many young ambitions, starting on foot, give one another rendezvous at the same point, there is always contention of wills, extreme wretchedness, bitter struggles. In this dreadful battle, selfishness, the most overbearing or the most adroit selfishness, gains the victory; and it is envied and applauded in spite, as Molière said, of outeries, and we all know it.

When, in his capacity as enemy to the new dynasty, Raoul was introduced in the salon of Madame de Montcornet, his apparent grandeurs were flourishing. He was accepted as the political critic of the de Marsays, the Rastignacs, and the Roche-Hugons, who had stepped into power. Émile Blondet, the victim of incurable hesitation and of his innate repugnance to

any action that concerned only himself, continued his trade of scoffer, took sides with no one, and kept well with all. He was friendly with Raoul, friendly with Rastignac, friendly with Montcornet.

“You are a political triangle,” said de Marsay, laughing, when they met at the Opera. “That geometric form, my dear fellow, belongs only to the Deity, who has nothing to do; ambitious men ought to follow curved lines, the shortest road in politics.”

Seen from a distance, Raoul Nathan was a very fine meteor. Fashion accepted his ways and his appearance. His borrowed republicanism gave him, for the time being, that Jansenist harshness assumed by the defenders of the popular cause, while they inwardly scoff at it, — a quality not without charm in the eyes of women. Women like to perform prodigies, break rocks, and soften natures which seem of iron.

Raoul's moral costume was therefore in keeping with his clothes. He was fitted to be what he became to the Eve who was bored in her paradise in the rue du Rocher, — the fascinating serpent, the fine talker with magnetic eyes and harmonious motions who tempted the first woman. No sooner had the Comtesse Marie laid eyes on Raoul than she felt an inward emotion, the violence of which caused her a species of terror. The glance of that fraudulent great man exercised a physical influence upon her, which quivered in her very heart, and troubled it. But the trouble was pleasure. The purple mantle which celebrity had draped for a moment round Nathan's shoulders dazzled the ingenuous young woman. When tea was served, she rose from her seat among a knot of talking women,

where she had been striving to see and hear that extraordinary being. Her silence and absorption were noticed by her false friends.

The countess approached the divan in the centre of the room, where Raoul was perorating. She stood there with her arm in that of Madame Octave de Camp, an excellent woman, who kept the secret of the involuntary trembling by which these violent emotions betrayed themselves. Though the eyes of a captivated woman are apt to shed wonderful sweetness, Raoul was too occupied at that moment in letting off fireworks, too absorbed in his epigrams going up like rockets (in the midst of which were flaming portraits drawn in lines of fire) to notice the naïve admiration of one little Eve concealed in a group of women. Marie's curiosity — like that which would undoubtedly precipitate all Paris into the Jardin des Plantes to see a unicorn, if such an animal could be found in those mountains of the moon, still virgin of the tread of Europeans — intoxicates a secondary mind as much as it saddens great ones; but Raoul was enchanted by it; although he was then too anxious to secure all women to care very much for one alone.

"Take care, my dear," said Marie's kind and gracious companion in her ear, "and go home."

The countess looked at her husband to ask for his arm with one of those glances which husbands do not always understand. Félix did so, and took her home.

"My dear friend," said Madame d'Espard in Raoul's ear, "you are a lucky fellow. You have made more than one conquest to-night, and among them that of the charming woman who has just left us so abruptly."

"Do you know what the Marquise d'Espard meant by that?" said Raoul to Rastignac, when they happened to be comparatively alone between one and two o'clock in the morning.

"I am told that the Comtesse de Vandenesse has taken a violent fancy to you. You are not to be pitied!" said Rastignac.

"I did not see her," said Raoul.

"Oh! but you will see her, you scamp!" cried Émile Blondet, who was standing by. "Lady Dudley is going to ask you to her grand ball, that you may meet the pretty countess."

Raoul and Blondet went off with Rastignac, who offered them his carriage. All three laughed at the combination of an eclectic under-secretary of State, a ferocious republican, and a political atheist.

"Suppose we sup at the expense of the present order of things?" said Blondet, who would fain recall suppers to fashion.

Rastignac took them to Véry's, sent away his carriage, and all three sat down to table to analyze society with Rabelaisian laughs. During the supper, Rastignac and Blondet advised their provisional enemy not to neglect such a capital chance of advancement as the one now offered to him. The two *roués* gave him, in fine satirical style, the history of Madame Félix de Vandenesse; they drove the scalpel of epigram and the sharp points of much good wit into that innocent girlhood and happy marriage. Blondet congratulated Raoul on encountering a woman guilty of nothing worse so far than horrible drawings in red chalk, attenuated water-colors, slippers embroidered for a

husband, sonatas executed with the best intentions, — a girl tied to her mother's apron-strings till she was eighteen, trussed for religious practices, seasoned by Vandenesse, and cooked to a point by marriage. At the third bottle of champagne, Raoul unbosomed himself as he had never done before in his life.

"My friends," he said, "you know my relations with Florine; you also know my life, and you will not be surprised to hear me say that I am absolutely ignorant of what a countess's love may be like. I have often felt mortified that I, a poet, could not give myself a Beatrice, a Laura, except in poetry. A pure and noble woman is like an unstained conscience, — she represents us to ourselves under a noble form. Elsewhere we may soil ourselves, but with her we are always proud, lofty, and immaculate. Elsewhere we lead ill-regulated lives; with her we breathe the calm, the freshness, the verdure of an oasis —"

"Go on, go on, my dear fellow!" cried Rastignac; "twang that fourth string with the prayer in 'Moses' like Paganini."

Raoul remained silent, with fixed eyes, apparently musing.

"This wretched ministerial apprentice does not understand me," he said, after a moment's silence.

So, while the poor Eve in the rue du Rocher went to bed in the sheets of shame, frightened at the pleasure with which she had listened to that sham great poet, these three bold minds were trampling with jests over the tender flowers of her dawning love. Ah! if women only knew the cynical tone that such men, so humble, so fawning in their presence, take behind

their backs! how they sneer at what they say they adore! Fresh, pure, gracious being, how the scoffing jester disrobes and analyzes her! but, even so, the more she loses veils, the more her beauty shines.

Marie was at this moment comparing Raoul and Félix, without imagining the danger there might be for her in such comparisons. Nothing could present a greater contrast than the disorderly, vigorous Raoul to Félix de Vandenesse, who cared for his person like a dainty woman, wore well-fitting clothes, had a charming *desinvoltura*, and was a votary of English nicety, to which, in earlier days, Lady Dudley had trained him. Marie, as a good and pious woman, soon forbade herself even to think of Raoul, and considered that she was a monster of ingratitude for making the comparison.

"What do you think of Raoul Nathan?" she asked her husband the next day at breakfast.

"He is something of a charlatan," replied Félix; "one of those volcanoes who are easily calmed down with a little gold-dust. Madame de Montcornet makes a mistake in admitting him."

This answer annoyed Marie, all the more because Félix supported his opinion with certain facts, relating what he knew of Raoul Nathan's life, — a precarious existence mixed up with a popular actress.

"If the man has genius," he said in conclusion, "he certainly has neither the constancy nor the patience which sanctifies it, and makes it a thing divine. He endeavors to impose on the world by placing himself on a level which he does nothing to maintain. True talent, pains-taking and honorable

talent does not act thus. Men who possess such talent follow their path courageously; they accept its pains and penalties, and don't cover them with tinsel."

A woman's thought is endowed with incredible elasticity. When she receives a knockdown blow, she bends, seems crushed, and then renews her natural shape in a given time.

"Félix is no doubt right," thought she.

But three days later she was once more thinking of the serpent, recalled to him by that singular emotion, painful and yet sweet, which the first sight of Raoul had given her. The count and countess went to Lady Dudley's grand ball, where, by the bye, de Marsay appeared in society for the last time. He died about two months later, leaving the reputation of a great statesman, because, as Blondet remarked, he was incomprehensible.

Vandenesse and his wife again met Raoul Nathan at this ball, which was remarkable for the meeting of several personages of the political drama, who were not a little astonished to find themselves together. It was one of the first solemnities of the great world. The salons presented a magnificent spectacle to the eye, — flowers, diamonds, and brilliant head-dresses; all jewel-boxes emptied; all resources of the toilet put under contribution. The ball-room might be compared to one of those choice conservatories where rich horticulturists collect the most superb rarities, — same brilliancy, same delicacy of texture. On all sides white or tinted gauzes like the wings of the airiest dragon-fly, crêpes, laces, blondes, and tulles, varied as the fantasies of entomological nature; den-

telled, waved, and scalloped; spider's webs of gold and silver; mists of silk embroidered by fairy fingers; plumes colored by the fire of the tropics drooping from haughty heads; pearls twined in braided hair; shot or ribbed or brocaded silks, as though the genius of arabesque had presided over French manufactures, — all this luxury was in harmony with the beauties collected there as if to realize a "Keepsake." The eye received an impression of the whitest shoulders, some amber-tinted, others so polished as to seem colandered, some dewy, some plump and satiny, as though Rubens had prepared their flesh; in short, all shades known to man in white. Here were eyes sparkling like onyx or turquoise fringed with dark lashes; faces of varied outline presenting the most graceful types of many lands; foreheads noble and majestic, or softly rounded, as if thought ruled, or flat, as if resistant will reigned there unconquered; beautiful bosoms swelling, as George IV. admired them, or widely parted after the fashion of the eighteenth century, or pressed together, as Louis XV. required; some shown boldly, without veils, others covered by those charming pleated chemisettes which Raffaele painted. The prettiest feet pointed for the dance, the slimmest waists encircled in the waltz, stimulated the gaze of the most indifferent person present. The murmur of sweet voices, the rustle of gowns, the cadence of the dance, the whirl of the waltz harmoniously accompanied the music. A fairy's wand seemed to have commanded this dazzling revelry, this melody of perfumes, these iridescent lights glittering from crystal chandeliers or sparkling in candelabra. This assemblage of the prettiest

women in their prettiest dresses stood out upon a gloomy background of men in black coats, among whom the eye remarked the elegant, delicate, and correctly drawn profile of nobles, the ruddy beards and grave faces of Englishmen, and the more gracious faces of the French aristocracy. All the orders of Europe glittered on the breasts or hung from the necks of these men.

Examining this society carefully, it was seen to present not only the brilliant tones and colors of outward adornment, but to have a soul, — it lived, it felt, it thought. Hidden passion gave it a physiognomy; mischievous or malignant looks were exchanged; fair and giddy girls betrayed desires; jealous women told each other scandals behind their fans, or paid exaggerated compliments. Society, anointed, curled, and perfumed, gave itself up to social gayety which went to the brain like a heady liquor. It seemed as if from all foreheads, as well as from all hearts, ideas and sentiments were exhaling, which presently condensed and reacted in a volume on the coldest persons present, and excited them. At the most animated moment of this intoxicating party, in a corner of a gilded salon where certain bankers, ambassadors, and the immoral old English earl, Lord Dudley, were playing cards, Madame Félix de Vandenesse was irresistibly drawn to converse with Raoul Nathan. Possibly she yielded to that ball-intoxication which sometimes wrings avowals from the most discreet.

At sight of such a *fête*, and the splendors of a world in which he had never before appeared, Nathan was stirred to the soul by fresh ambition. Seeing Rasti-

gnac, whose younger brother had just been made bishop at twenty-seven years of age, and whose brother-in-law, Martial de la Roche-Hugon, was a minister, and who himself was under-secretary of State, and about to marry, rumor said, the only daughter of the Baron de Nucingen, — a girl with an illimitable *dot*; seeing, moreover, in the diplomatic body an obscure writer whom he had formerly known translating articles in foreign journals for a newspaper turned dynastic since 1830, also professors now made peers of France, — he felt with anguish that he was left behind on a bad road by advocating the overthrow of this new aristocracy of lucky talent, of cleverness crowned by success, and of real merit. Even Blondet, so unfortunate, so used by others in journalism, but so welcomed here, who could, if he liked, enter a career of public service through the influence of Madame de Montcornet, seemed to Nathan's eyes a striking example of the power of social relations. Secretly, in his heart, he resolved to play the game of political opinions, like de Marsay, Rastignac, Blondet, Talleyrand, the leader of this set of men; to rely on facts only, turn them to his own profit, regard his system as a weapon, and not interfere with a society so well constituted, so shrewd, so natural.

"My future," he thought, "will depend on the influence of some woman belonging to this class of society."

With this thought in his mind, conceived by the flame of a frenzied desire, he fell upon the Comtesse de Vandenesse like a hawk on its prey. That charming young woman in her head-dress of marabouts, which

produced the delightful *flou* of the paintings of Lawrence and harmonized well with her gentle nature, was penetrated through and through by the foaming vigor of this poet wild with ambition. Lady Dudley, whom nothing escaped, aided this *tête-à-tête* by throwing the Comte de Vandenesse with Madame de Manerville. Strong in her former ascendancy over him, Natalie de Manerville amused herself by leading Félix into the mazes of a quarrel of witty teasing, blushing half-confidences, regrets coyly flung like flowers at his feet, recriminations in which she excused herself for the sole purpose of being put in the wrong.

These former lovers were speaking to each other for the first time since their rupture; and while her husband's former love was stirring the embers to see if a spark were yet alive, Madame Félix de Vandenesse was undergoing those violent palpitations which a woman feels at the certainty of doing wrong, and stepping on forbidden ground, — emotions that are not without charm, and which awaken various dormant faculties. Women are fond of using Bluebeard's bloody key, that fine mythological idea for which we are indebted to Perrault.

The dramatist — who knew his Shakespeare — displayed his wretchedness, related his struggle with men and things, made his hearer aware of his baseless grandeur, his unrecognized political genius, his life without noble affections. Without saying a single definite word, he contrived to suggest to this charming woman that she should play the noble part of Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*, and love and protect him. It was all, of course, in the ethereal regions of sentiment. Forget-

me-nots are not more blue, lilies not more white than the images, thoughts, and radiantly illumined brow of this accomplished artist, who was likely to send his conversation to a publisher. He played his part of reptile to this poor Eve so cleverly, he made the fatal bloom of the apple so dazzling to her eyes, that Marie left the ball-room filled with that species of remorse which resembles hope, flattered in all her vanities, stirred to every corner of her heart, caught by her own virtues, allured by her native pity for misfortune.

Perhaps Madame de Manerville had taken Vandenesse into the salon where his wife was talking with Nathan; perhaps he had come there himself to fetch Marie, and take her home; perhaps his conversation with his former flame had awakened slumbering griefs; certain it is that when his wife took his arm to leave the ball-room, she saw that his face was sad and his look serious. The countess wondered if he was displeased with her. No sooner were they seated in the carriage than she turned to Félix and said, with a mischievous smile, —

“Did not I see you talking half the evening with Madame de Manerville?”

Félix was not out of the tangled paths into which his wife had led him by this charming little quarrel, when the carriage turned into their court-yard. This was Marie’s first artifice dictated by her new emotion; and she even took pleasure in triumphing over a man who, until then, had seemed to her so superior.

V.

FLORINE.

BETWEEN the rue Basse-du-Rempart and the rue Neuve-des-Mathurins, Raoul had, on the third floor of an ugly and narrow house, in the Passage Sandrié, a poor enough lodging, cold and bare, where he lived ostensibly for the general public, for literary neophytes, and for his creditors, duns, and other annoying persons whom he kept on the threshold of private life. His real home, his fine existence, his presentation of himself before his friends, was in the house of Mademoiselle Florine, a second-class comedy actress, where, for ten years, the said friends, journalists, certain authors, and writers in general disported themselves in the society of equally illustrious actresses. For ten years Raoul had attached himself so closely to this woman that he passed more than half of his life with her; he took all his meals at her house unless he had some friend to invite, or an invitation to dinner elsewhere.

To consummate corruption, Florine added a lively wit, which intercourse with artists had developed and practice sharpened day by day. Wit is thought to be a quality rare in comedians. It is so natural to suppose that persons who spend their lives in showing things on the outside have nothing within. But if we

reflect on the small number of actors and actresses who live in each century, and also on how many dramatic authors and fascinating women this population has supplied relatively to its numbers, it is allowable to refute that opinion, which rests, and apparently will rest forever, on a criticism made against dramatic artists, — namely, that their personal sentiments are destroyed by the plastic presentation of passions; whereas, in fact, they put into their art only their gifts of mind, memory, and imagination. Great artists are beings who, to quote Napoleon, can cut off at will the connection which Nature has put between the senses and thought. Molière and Talma, in their old age, were more in love than ordinary men in all their lives.

Accustomed to listen to journalists, who guess at most things, putting two and two together, to writers, who foresee and tell all that they see; accustomed also to the ways of certain political personages, who watched one another in her house, and profited by all admissions, Florine presented in her own person a mixture of devil and angel, which made her peculiarly fitted to receive these *roués*. They delighted in her cool self-possession; her anomalies of mind and heart entertained them prodigiously. Her house, enriched by gallant tributes, displayed the exaggerated magnificence of women who, caring little about the cost of things, care only for the things themselves, and give them the value of their own caprices, — women who will break a fan or a smelling-bottle fit for queens in a moment of passion, and scream with rage if a servant breaks a ten-franc saucer from which their poodle drinks.

Florine's dining-room, filled with her most distinguished offerings, will give a fair idea of this pell-mell of regal and fantastic luxury. Throughout, even on the ceilings, it was panelled in oak, picked out, here and there, by dead-gold lines. These panels were framed in relief with figures of children playing with fantastic animals, among which the light danced and floated, touching here a sketch by Bixiou, that maker of caricatures, there the cast of an angel holding a vessel of holy water (presented by François Souchet), farther on a coquettish painting of Joseph Bridau, a gloomy picture of a Spanish alchemist by Hippolyte Schinner, an autograph of Lord Byron to Lady Caroline Lamb, framed in carved ebony, while, hanging opposite as a species of pendant, was a letter from Napoleon to Josephine. All these things were placed about without the slightest symmetry, but with almost imperceptible art. On the chimney-piece, of exquisitely carved oak, there was nothing except a strange, evidently Florentine, ivory statuette attributed to Michael Angelo, representing Pan discovering a woman under the skin of a young shepherd, the original of which is in the royal palace of Vienna. On either side were candelabra of Renaissance design. A clock, by Boule, on a tortoise-shell stand, inlaid with brass, sparkled in the centre of one panel between two statuettes, undoubtedly obtained from the demolition of some abbey. In the corners of the room, on pedestals, were lamps of royal magnificence, as to which a manufacturer had made strong remonstrance against adapting his lamps to Japanese vases. On a marvellous sideboard was displayed a service of silver

plate, the gift of an English lord, also porcelains in high relief; in short, the luxury of an actress who has no other property than her furniture.

The bedroom, all in violet, was a dream that Florine had indulged from her *début*, the chief features of which were curtains of violet velvet lined with white silk, and looped over tulle; a ceiling of white cashmere with violet satin rays, an ermine carpet beside the bed; in the bed, the curtains of which resembled a lily turned upside down, was a lantern by which to read the newspaper plaudits or criticisms before they appeared in the morning. A yellow salon, its effect heightened by trimmings of the color of Florentine bronze, was in harmony with the rest of these magnificences, a further description of which would make our pages resemble the posters of an auction sale. To find comparisons for all these fine things, it would be necessary to go to a certain house that was almost next door, belonging to a Rothschild.

Sophie Grignault, surnamed Florine by a form of baptism quite common in theatres, had made her first appearances, in spite of her beauty, on very inferior boards. Her success and her money she owed to Raoul Nathan. This association of their two fates, usual enough in the dramatic and literary world, did no harm to Raoul, who kept up the outward conventions of a man of the world. Moreover, Florine's actual means were precarious; her revenues came from her salary and her leaves of absence, and barely sufficed for her dress and her household expenses. Nathan gave her certain perquisites which he managed to levy as critic on several of the new enterprises of in-

dustrial art. But although he was always gallant and protecting towards her, that protection had nothing regular or solid about it.

This uncertainty, and this life on a bough, as it were, did not alarm Florine; she believed in her talent, and she believed in her beauty. Her robust faith was somewhat comical to those who heard her staking her future upon it, when remonstrances were made to her.

"I can have income enough when I please," she was wont to say; "I have invested fifty francs on the Grand-livre."

No one could ever understand how it happened that Florine, handsome as she was, had remained in obscurity for seven years; but the fact is, Florine was enrolled as a supernumerary at thirteen years of age, and made her *début* two years later at an obscure boulevard theatre. At fifteen, neither beauty nor talent exist; a woman is simply all promise.

She was now twenty-eight, — the age at which the beauties of a French woman are in their glory. Painters particularly admired the lustre of her white shoulders, tinted with olive tones about the nape of the neck, and wonderfully firm and polished, so that the light shimmered over them as it does on watered silk. When she turned her head, superb folds formed about her neck, the admiration of sculptors. She carried on this triumphant neck the small head of a Roman empress, the delicate, round, and self-willed head of Pompeia, with features of elegant correctness, and the smooth forehead of a woman who drives all care away and all reflection, who yields easily, but is capable of

balking like a mule, and incapable at such times of listening to reason. That forehead, turned, as it were, with one cut of the chisel, brought out the beauty of the golden hair, which was raised in front, after the Roman fashion, in two equal masses, and twisted up behind the head to prolong the line of the neck, and enhance that whiteness by its beautiful color. Black and delicate eyebrows, drawn by a Chinese brush, encircled the soft eyelids, which were threaded with rosy fibres. The pupils of the eyes, extremely bright, though striped with brown rays, gave to her glance the cruel fixity of a beast of prey, and betrayed the cold maliciousness of the courtesan. The eyes were gray, fringed with black lashes, — a charming contrast, which made their expression of calm and contemplative voluptuousness the more observable; the circle round the eyes showed marks of fatigue, but the artistic manner in which she could turn her eyeballs, right and left, or up and down, to observe, or seem to meditate, the way in which she could hold them fixed, casting out their vivid fire without moving her head, without taking from her face its absolute immovability (a manœuvre learned upon the stage), and the vivacity of their glance, as she looked about a theatre in search of a friend, made her eyes the most terrible, also the softest, in short, the most extraordinary eyes in the world. Rouge had destroyed by this time the diaphanous tints of her cheeks, the flesh of which was still delicate; but though she could no longer blush or turn pale, she had a thin nose with rosy, passionate nostrils, made to express irony, — the mocking irony of Molière's women-servants. Her

sensual mouth, expressive of sarcasm and love of dissipation, was adorned with a deep furrow that united the upper lip with the nose. Her chin, white and rather fat, betrayed the violence of passion. Her hands and arms were worthy of a sovereign.

But she had one ineradicable sign of low birth, — her foot was short and fat. No inherited quality ever caused greater distress. Florine had tried everything, short of amputation, to get rid of it. The feet were obstinate, like the Breton race from which she came; they resisted all treatment. Florine now wore long boots stuffed with cotton, to give length, and the semblance of an instep. Her figure was of medium height, threatened with corpulence, but still well-balanced, and well-made.

Morally, she was an adept in all the attitudinizing, quarrelling, alluring, and cajoling of her business; and she gave to those actions a savor of their own by playing childlike innocence, and slipping in among her artless speeches philosophical malignities. Apparently ignorant and giddy, she was very strong on money-matters and commercial law, — for the reason that she had gone through so much misery before attaining to her present precarious success. She had come down, story by story, from the garret to the first floor, through so many vicissitudes! She knew life, from that which begins on Brie cheese and ends at pineapples; from that which cooks and washes in the corner of a garret on an earthenware stove, to that which convokes the tribes of pot-bellied chefs and saucemakers. She had lived on credit and not killed it; she was ignorant of nothing that honest women

ignore; she spoke all languages: she was one of the populace by experience; she was noble by beauty and physical distinction. Suspicious as a spy, or a judge, or an old statesman, she was difficult to impose upon, and therefore the more able to see clearly into most matters. She knew the ways of managing tradespeople, and how to evade their snares, and she was quite as well versed in the prices of things as a public appraiser. To see her lying on her sofa, like a young bride, fresh and white, holding her part in her hand and learning it, you would have thought her a child of sixteen, ingenuous, ignorant, and weak, with no other artifice about her but her innocence. Let a creditor contrive to enter, and she was up like a startled fawn, and swearing a good round oath.

“Hey! my good fellow; your insolence is too dear an interest on the money I owe you,” she would say. “I am sick of seeing you. Send the sheriff here; I’d prefer him to your silly face.”

Florine gave charming dinners, concerts, and well-attended soirées, where play ran high. Her female friends were all handsome; no old woman had ever appeared within her precincts. She was not jealous; in fact, she would have thought jealousy an admission of inferiority. She had known Coralie and La Torpille in their lifetimes, and now knew Tullia, Euphrasie, Aquilina, Madame du Val-Noble, Mariette, — those women who pass through Paris like gossamer through the atmosphere, without our knowing where they go nor whence they came; to-day queens, to-morrow slaves. She also knew the actresses, her rivals, and all the prima-donnas; in short, that whole

exceptional feminine society, so kindly, so graceful in its easy *sans-souci*, which absorbs into its own Bohemian life all who allow themselves to be caught in the frantic whirl of its gay spirits, its eager abandonment, and its contemptuous indifference to the future.

Though this Bohemian life displayed itself in her house in tumultuous disorder, amid the laughter of artists of every description, the queen of the revels had ten fingers on which she knew better how to count than any of her guests. In that house secret saturnalias of literature and art, politics and finance were carried on; there, desire reigned a sovereign; there, caprice and fancy were as sacred as honor and virtue to a bourgeoisie; thither came Blondet, Finot, Étienne Lousteau, Vernou the feuilletonist, Couture, Bixiou, Rastignac in his earlier days, Claude Vignon the critic, Nucingen the banker, du Tillet, Conti the composer, — in short, that whole devil-may-care legion of selfish materialists of all kinds; friends of Florine and of the singers, actresses and *danseuses* collected about her. They all hated or liked one another according to circumstances.

This Bohemian resort, to which celebrity was the only ticket of admission, was a Hades of the mind, the galleys of the intellect. No one could enter there without having legally conquered fortune, done ten years of misery, strangled two or three passions, acquired some celebrity, either by books or waistcoats, by dramas or fine equipages; plots were hatched there, means of making fortune scrutinized, all things were discussed and weighed. But every man, on leaving it, resumed the livery of his own opinions;

there he could, without compromising himself, criticise his own party, admit the knowledge and good play of his adversaries, formulate thoughts that no one admits thinking, — in short, say all, as if ready to do all. Paris is the only place in the world where such eclectic houses exist; where all tastes, all vices, all opinions are received under decent guise. Therefore it is not yet certain that Florine will remain to the end of her career a second-class actress.

Florine's life was by no means an idle one, or a life to be envied. Many persons, misled by the magnificent pedestal that the stage gives to a woman, suppose her in the midst of a perpetual carnival. In the dark recesses of a porter's lodge, beneath the tiles of an attic roof, many a poor girl dreams, on returning from the theatre, of pearls and diamonds, gold-embroidered gowns and sumptuous girdles; she fancies herself adored, applauded, courted; but little she knows of that treadmill life, in which the actress is forced to rehearsals under pain of fines, to the reading of new pieces, to the constant study of new rôles. At each representation Florine changes her dress at least two or three times; often she comes home exhausted and half-dead; but before she can rest, she must wash off with various cosmetics the white and the red she has applied, and clean all the powder from her hair, if she has played a part from the eighteenth century. She scarcely has time for food. When she plays, an actress can live no life of her own; she can neither dress, nor eat, nor talk. Florine often has no time to sup. On returning from a play, which lasts, in these days, till after midnight,

she does not get to bed before two in the morning; but she must rise early to study her part, order her dresses, try them on, breakfast, read her love-letters, answer them, discuss with the leader of the *claque* the place for the plaudits, pay for the triumphs of the last month in solid cash, and bespeak those of the month ahead. In the days of Saint-Genest, the canonized comedian who fulfilled his duties in a pious manner and wore a hair shirt, we must suppose that an actor's life did not demand this incessant activity. Sometimes Florine, seized with a bourgeois desire to get out into the country and gather flowers, pretends to the manager that she is ill.

But even these mechanical occupations are nothing in comparison with the intrigues to be carried on, the pains of wounded vanity to be endured, — preferences shown by authors, parts taken away or given to others, exactions of the male actors, spite of rivals, naggings of the stage manager, struggles with journalists; all of which require another twelve hours to the day. But even so far, nothing has been said of the art of acting, the expression of passion, the practice of positions and gesture, the minute care and watchfulness required on the stage, where a thousand opera-glasses are ready to detect a flaw, — labors which consumed the life and thought of Talma, Lekain, Baron, Contat, Clairon, Champmeslé. In these infernal *coulisses* self-love has no sex; the artist who triumphs, be it man or woman, has all the other men and women against him or her. Then, as to money, however many engagements Florine may have, her salary does not cover the costs of her stage toilet, which, in addition to its costumes,

requires an immense variety of long gloves, shoes, and frippery; and all this exclusive of her personal clothing. The first third of such a life is spent in struggling and imploring; the next third, in getting a foothold; the last third, in defending it. If happiness is frantically grasped, it is because it is so rare, so long desired, and found at last only amid the odious fictitious pleasures and smiles of such a life.

As for Florine, Raoul's power in the press was like a protecting sceptre; he spared her many cares and anxieties; she clung to him less as a lover than a prop; she took care of him like a father, she deceived him like a husband; but she would readily have sacrificed all she had to him. Raoul could, and did do everything for her vanity as an actress, for the peace of her self-love, and for her future on the stage. Without the intervention of a successful author, there is no successful actress; Champmeslé was due to Racine, like Mars to Monvel and Andrieux. Florine could do nothing in return for Raoul, though she would gladly have been useful and necessary to him. She reckoned on the charms of habit to keep him by her; she was always ready to open her salons and display the luxury of her dinners and suppers for his friends, and to further his projects. She desired to be for him what Madame de Pompadour was to Louis XV. All actresses envied Florine's position, and some journalists envied that of Raoul.

Those to whom the inclination of the human mind towards change, opposition, and contrasts is known, will readily understand that after ten years of this lawless Bohemian life, full of ups and downs, of *fêtes*

and sheriffs, of orgies and forced sobrieties, Raoul was attracted to the idea of another love, — to the gentle, harmonious house and presence of a great lady, just as the Comtesse Félix instinctively desired to introduce the torture of great emotions into a life made monotonous by happiness. This law of life is the law of all arts, which exist only by contrasts. A work done without this incentive is the loftiest expression of genius, just as the cloister is the highest expression of the Christian life.

On returning to his lodging from Lady Dudley's ball, Raoul found a note from Florine, brought by her maid, which an invincible sleepiness prevented him from reading at that moment. He fell asleep, dreaming of a gentle love that his life had so far lacked. Some hours later he opened the note, and found in it important news, which neither Rastignac nor de Marsay had allowed to transpire. The indiscretion of a member of the government had revealed to the actress the coming dissolution of the Chamber after the present session. Raoul instantly went to Florine's house and sent for Blondet. In the actress's boudoir, with their feet on the fender, Émile and Raoul analyzed the political situation of France in 1834. On which side lay the best chance of fortune? They reviewed all parties and all shades of party, — pure republicans, presiding republicans, republicans without a republic, constitutionals without a dynasty, ministerial conservatives, ministerial absolutists; also the Right, the aristocratic Right, the legitimist, henriquinist Right, and the carlist Right. Between the party of resistance and that of action there was no

discussion; they might as well have hesitated between life and death.

At this period a flock of newspapers, created to represent all shades of opinion, produced a fearful pell-mell of political principles. Blondet, the most judicious mind of the day, — judicious for others, never for himself, like some great lawyers unable to manage their own affairs, — was magnificent in such a discussion. The upshot was that he advised Nathan not to apostatize too suddenly.

“Napoleon said it; you can’t make young republics of old monarchies. Therefore, my dear fellow, become the hero, the support, the creator of the Left Centre in the new Chamber, and you’ll succeed. Once admitted into political ranks, once in the government, you can be what you like, — of any opinion that triumphs.”

Nathan was bent on creating a daily political journal and becoming the absolute master of an enterprise which should absorb into it the countless little papers then swarming from the press, and establish ramifications with a review. He had seen so many fortunes made all around him by the press that he would not listen to Blondet, who warned him not to trust to such a venture, declaring that the plan was unsound, so great was the present number of newspapers, all fighting for subscribers. Raoul, relying on his so-called friends and his own courage, was all for daring it; he sprang up eagerly and said, with a proud gesture, —

“I shall succeed.”

“But you have n’t a sou.”

"I will write a play."

"It will fail."

"Let it fail!" replied Nathan.

He rushed through the various rooms of Florine's apartment, followed by Blondet, who thought him crazy, looking with a greedy eye upon the wealth displayed there. Blondet understood that look.

"There's a hundred and more thousand francs in them," he remarked.

"Yes," said Raoul, sighing, as he looked at Florine's sumptuous bedstead; "but I'd rather be a pedler all my life on the boulevard, and live on fried potatoes, than sell one item of this apartment."

"Not one item," said Blondet; "sell all. Ambition is like death; it takes all or nothing."

"No, a hundred times no! I would take anything from my new countess; but rob Florine of her shell? no."

"Upset our money-box, break one's balance-pole, smash our refuge, — yes, that would be serious," said Blondet with a tragic air.

"It seems to me from what I hear that you want to play politics instead of comedies," said Florine, suddenly appearing.

"Yes, my dear, yes," said Raoul, affectionately taking her by the neck and kissing her forehead. "Don't make faces at that; you won't lose anything. A minister can do better than a journalist for the queen of the boards. What parts and what holidays you shall have!"

"Where will you get the money?" she said.

"From my uncle," replied Raoul.

Florine knew Raoul's *uncle*. The word meant usury, as in popular parlance *aunt* means pawn.

"Don't worry yourself, my little darling," said Blondet to Florine, tapping her shoulder. "I'll get him the assistance of Massol, a lawyer who wants to be Keeper of the Seals, and du Tillet, who wants to be deputy; also Finot, who has never yet got beyond his *petit-journal*, and Pantin, who wants to be master of petitions, and who dabbles in reviews. Yes, I'll save him from himself; we'll convoke here to supper Étienne Lousteau, who can do the feuilleton; Claude Vignon for criticisms; Félicien Vernou as general care-taker; the lawyer will work, and du Tillet may take charge of the Bourse, the money article, and all industrial questions. We'll see where these various talents and slaves united will land the enterprise."

"In a hospital or a ministry, — where all men ruined in body or mind are apt to go," said Raoul, laughing.

"Where and when shall we invite them?"

"Here, five days hence."

"Tell me the sum you want," said Florine, simply.

"Well, the lawyer, du Tillet, and Raoul will each have to put up a hundred thousand francs before they embark on the affair," replied Blondet. "Then the paper can run eighteen months; about long enough for a rise and fall in Paris."

Florine gave a little grimace of approval. The two friends jumped into a cabriolet to go about collecting guests and pens, ideas and self-interests.

Florine meantime sent for certain dealers in old furniture, bric-à-brac, pictures, and jewels. These men entered her sanctuary and took an inventory of every

article, precisely as if Florine were dead. She declared she would sell everything at public auction if they did not offer her a proper price. She had had the luck to please, she said, a rich English lord, and she wanted to get rid of all her property and look poor, so that he might give her a fine house and furniture, fit to rival the Rothschilds. But in spite of these persuasions and subterfuges, all the dealers would offer her for a mass of belongings worth a hundred and fifty thousand francs was seventy thousand. Florine thereupon offered to deliver over everything in eight days for eighty thousand, — “To take or leave,” she said, — and the bargain was concluded. After the men had departed she skipped for joy, like the hills of King David, and performed all manner of follies, not having thought herself so rich.

When Raoul came back she made him a little scene, pretending to be hurt; she declared that he abandoned her; that she had reflected; men did not pass from one party to another, from the stage to the Chamber, without some reason; there was a woman at the bottom; she had a rival! In short, she made him swear eternal fidelity. Five days later she gave a splendid feast. The new journal was baptized in floods of wine and wit, with oaths of loyalty, fidelity, and good-fellowship. The name, forgotten now like those of the Liberal, Communal, Departmental, Garde National, Federal, Impartial, was something in *al* that was equally imposing and evanescent. At three in the morning Florine could undress and go to bed as if alone, though no one had left the house; these lights of the epoch were sleeping the sleep of brutes. And when, early in

the morning, the packers and vans arrived to remove Florine's treasures she laughed to see the porters moving the bodies of the celebrated men like pieces of furniture that lay in their way. *Sic transit* all her fine things! all her presents and souvenirs went to the shops of the various dealers, where no one on seeing them would know how those flowers of luxury had been originally paid for. It was agreed that a few little necessary articles should be left, for Florine's personal convenience until evening, — her bed, a table, a few chairs, and china enough to give her guests their breakfast.

Having gone to sleep beneath the draperies of wealth and luxury, these distinguished men awoke to find themselves within bare walls, full of nail-holes, degraded into abject poverty.

"Why, Florine! — The poor girl has been seized for debt!" cried Bixiou, who was one of the guests. "Quick! a subscription for her!"

On this they all roused up. Every pocket was emptied and produced a total of thirty-seven francs, which Raoul carried in jest to Florine's bedside. She burst out laughing and lifted her pillow, beneath which lay a mass of bank-notes to which she pointed.

Raoul called to Blondet.

"Ah! I see!" cried Blondet. "The little cheat has sold herself out without a word to us. Well done, you little angel!"

Thereupon, the actress was borne in triumph into the dining-room where most of the party still remained. The lawyer and du Tillet had departed.

That evening Florine had an ovation at the theatre;

the story of her sacrifice had circulated among the audience.

"I'd rather be applauded for my talent," said her rival in the green-room.

"A natural desire in an actress who has never been applauded at all," remarked Florine.

During the evening Florine's maid installed her in Raoul's apartment in the Passage Sandrié. Raoul himself was to encamp in the house where the office of the new journal was established.

Such was the rival of the innocent Madame de Vandenesse. Raoul was the connecting link between the actress and the countess,—a knot severed by a duchess in the days of Louis XV. by the poisoning of Adrienne Lecouvreur; a not inconceivable vengeance, considering the offence.

Florine, however, was not in the way of Raoul's dawning passion. She foresaw the lack of money in the difficult enterprise he had undertaken, and she asked for leave of absence from the theatre. Raoul conducted the negotiation in a way to make himself more than ever valuable to her. With the good sense of the peasant in La Fontaine's fable, who makes sure of a dinner while the patricians talk, the actress went into the provinces to cut faggots for her celebrated man while he was employed in hunting power.

VI.

ROMANTIC LOVE.

ON the morrow of the ball given by Lady Dudley, Marie, without having received the slightest declaration, believed that she was loved by Raoul according to the programme of her dreams, and Raoul was aware that the countess had chosen him for her lover. Though neither had reached the incline of such emotions where preliminaries are abridged, both were on the road to it. Raoul, wearied with the dissipations of life, longed for an ideal world, while Marie, from whom the thought of wrong-doing was far, indeed, never imagined the possibility of going out of such a world. No love was ever more innocent or purer than theirs; but none was ever more enthusiastic or more entrancing in thought.

The countess was captivated by ideas worthy of the days of chivalry, though completely modernized. The glowing conversation of the poet had more echo in her mind than in her heart. She thought it fine to be his providence. How sweet the thought of supporting by her white and feeble hand this colossus,—whose feet of clay she did not choose to see; of giving life where life was needed; of being secretly the creator of a career; of helping a man of genius to struggle with fate and master it. Ah! to embroider his scarf for the tournament! to procure him weapons! to be his talis-

man against ill-fortune! his balm for every wound! For a woman brought up like Marie, religious and noble as she was, such a love was a form of charity. Hence the boldness of it. Pure sentiments often compromise themselves with a lofty disdain that resembles the boldness of courtesans.

As soon as by her specious distinctions Marie had convinced herself that she did not in any way impair her conjugal faith, she rushed into the happiness of loving Raoul. The least little things of her daily life acquired a charm. Her boudoir, where she thought of him, became a sanctuary. There was nothing there that did not rouse some sense of pleasure; even her ink-stand was the coming accomplice in the pleasures of correspondence; for she would now have letters to read and answer. Dress, that splendid poesy of the feminine life, unknown or exhausted by her, appeared to her eyes endowed with a magic hitherto unperceived. It suddenly became to her what it is to most women, the manifestation of an inward thought, a language, a symbol. How many enjoyments in a toilet arranged to please *him*, to do *him* honor! She gave herself up ingenuously to all those gracefully charming things in which so many Parisian women spend their lives, and which give such significance to all that we see about them, and in them, and on them. Few women go to milliners and dressmakers for their own pleasure and interest. When old they never think of adornment. The next time you meet in the street a young woman stopping for a moment to look into a shop-window, examine her face carefully. "Will he think I look better in that?" are the words written on

that fair brow, in the eyes sparkling with hope, in the smile that flickers on the lips.

Lady Dudley's ball took place on a Saturday night. On the following Monday the countess went to the Opera, feeling certain of seeing Raoul, who was, in fact, watching for her on one of the stairways leading down to the stalls. With what delight did she observe the unwonted care he had bestowed upon his clothes. This despiser of the laws of elegance had brushed and perfumed his hair; his waistcoat followed the fashion, his cravat was well tied, the bosom of his shirt was irreproachably smooth. Raoul was standing with his arms crossed as if posed for his portrait, magnificently indifferent to the rest of the audience and full of repressed impatience. Though lowered, his eyes were turned to the red velvet cushion on which lay Marie's arm. Félix, seated in the opposite corner of the box, had his back to Nathan.

So, in a moment, as it were, Marie had compelled this remarkable man to abjure his cynicism in the line of clothes. All women, high or low, are filled with delight on seeing a first proof of their power in one of these sudden metamorphoses. Such changes are an admission of serfdom.

"Those women were right; there is a great pleasure in being understood," she said to herself, thinking of her treacherous friends.

When the two lovers had gazed around the theatre with that glance that takes in everything, they exchanged a look of intelligence. It was for each as if some celestial dew had refreshed their hearts, burned-up with expectation.

"I have been here for an hour in purgatory, but now the heavens are opening," said Raoul's eyes.

"I knew you were waiting, but how could I help it?" replied those of the countess.

Thieves, spies, lovers, diplomats, and slaves of any kind alone know the resources and comforts of a glance. They alone know what it contains of meaning, sweetness, thought, anger, villany, displayed by the modification of that ray of light which conveys the soul. Between the box of the Comtesse Félix de Vandenesse and the step on which Raoul had perched there were barely thirty feet; and yet it was impossible to wipe out that distance. To a fiery being, who had hitherto known no space between his wishes and their gratification, this imaginary but insuperable gulf inspired a mad desire to spring to the countess with the bound of a tiger. In a species of rage he determined to try the ground and bow openly to the countess. She returned the bow with one of those slight inclinations of the head with which women take from their adorers all desire to continue their attempt. Comte Félix turned round to see who had bowed to his wife; he saw Nathan, but did not bow, and seemed to inquire the meaning of such audacity; then he turned back slowly and said a few words to his wife. Evidently the door of that box was closed to Nathan, who cast a terrible look of hatred upon Félix.

Madame d'Espard had seen the whole thing from her box, which was just above where Raoul was standing. She raised her voice in crying bravo to some singer, which caused Nathan to look up to her; he bowed and received in return a gracious smile which seemed to say: —

"If they won't admit you there come here to me."

Raoul obeyed the silent summons and went to her box. He felt the need of showing himself in a place which might teach that little Vandenesse that fame was every whit as good as nobility, and that all doors turned on their hinges to admit him. The marquise made him sit in front of her. She wanted to question him.

"Madame Félix de Vandenesse is fascinating in that gown," she said, complimenting the dress as if it were a book he had published the day before.

"Yes," said Raoul, indifferently, "marabouts are very becoming to her; but she seems wedded to them; she wore them on Saturday," he added, in a careless tone, as if to repudiate the intimacy Madame d'Espard was fastening upon him.

"You know the proverb," she replied. "There is no good fête without a morrow."

In the matter of repartees literary celebrities are often not as quick as women. Raoul pretended dullness, a last resource for clever men.

"That proverb is true in my case," he said, looking gallantly at the marquise.

"My dear friend, your speech comes too late; I can't accept it," she said, laughing. "Don't be so prudish! Come, I know how it was; you complimented Madame de Vandenesse at the ball on her marabouts, and she has put them on again for your sake. She likes you, and you adore her; it may be a little rapid, but it is all very natural. If I were mistaken you would n't be twisting your gloves like a man who is furious at having to sit here with me instead

of flying to the box of his idol. She has obtained," continued Madame d'Espard, glancing at his person impertinently, "certain sacrifices which you refused to make to society. She ought to be delighted with her success, — in fact, I have no doubt she is vain of it; I should be so in her place — immensely. She was never a woman of any mind, but she may now pass for one of genius. I am sure you will describe her in one of those delightful novels you write. And pray don't forget Vandenesse; put him in to please me. Really, his self-sufficiency is too much. I can't stand that Jupiter Olympian air of his, — the only mythological character exempt, they say, from ill-luck."

"Madame," cried Raoul, "you rate my soul very low if you think me capable of trafficking with my feelings, my affections. Rather than commit such literary baseness, I would do as they do in England, — put a rope round a woman's neck and sell her in the market."

"But I know Marie; she would like you to do it."

"She is incapable of liking it," said Raoul, vehemently.

"Oh! then you do know her well?"

Nathan laughed; he, the maker of scenes, to be trapped into playing one himself!

"Comedy is no longer there," he said, nodding at the stage; "it is here, in you."

He took his opera-glass and looked about the theatre to recover countenance.

"You are not angry with me, I hope?" said the marquise, giving him a sidelong glance. "I should

have had your secret somehow. Let us make peace. Come and see me; I receive every Wednesday, and I am sure the dear countess will never miss an evening if I let her know you will be there. So I shall be the gainer. Sometimes she comes between four and five o'clock, and I'll be kind and add you to the little set of favorites I admit at that hour."

"Ah!" cried Raoul, "how the world judges; it calls you unkind."

"So I am when I need to be," she replied. "We must defend ourselves. But your countess I adore; you will be contented with her; she is charming. Your name will be the first engraved upon her heart with that infantine joy that makes a lad cut the initials of his love on the barks of trees."

Raoul was aware of the danger of such conversations, in which a Parisian woman excels; he feared the marquise would extract some admission from him which she would instantly turn into ridicule among her friends. He therefore withdrew, prudently, as Lady Dudley entered.

"Well?" said the Englishwoman to the marquise, "how far have they got?"

"They are madly in love; he has just told me so."

"I wish he were uglier," said Lady Dudley, with a viperish look at Comte Félix. "In other respects he is just what I want him: the son of a Jew broker who died a bankrupt soon after his marriage; but the mother was a Catholic, and I am sorry to say she made a Christian of the boy."

This origin, which Nathan thought carefully concealed, Lady Dudley had just discovered, and she

enjoyed by anticipation the pleasure she should have in launching some terrible epigram against Vandenesse.

"Heavens! I have just invited him to my house!" cried Madame d'Espard.

"Did n't I receive him at my ball?" replied Lady Dudley. "Some pleasures, my dear love, are costly."

The news of the mutual attachment between Raoul and Madame de Vandenesse circulated in the world after this, but not without exciting denials and incredulity. The countess, however, was defended by her friends, Lady Dudley, and Mesdames d'Espard and de Manerville, with an unnecessary warmth that gave a certain color to the calumny.

On the following Wednesday evening Raoul went to Madame d'Espard's, and was able to exchange a few sentences with Marie, more expressive by their tones than their ideas. In the midst of the elegant assembly both found pleasure in those enjoyable sensations given by the voice, the gestures, the attitude of one beloved. The soul then fastens upon absolute nothings. No longer do ideas or even language speak, but things; and these so loudly, that often a man lets another pay the small attentions — bring a cup of tea, or the sugar to sweeten it — demanded by the woman he loves, fearful of betraying his emotion to eyes that seem to see nothing and yet see all. Raoul, however, a man indifferent to the eyes of the world, betrayed his passion in his speech and was brilliantly witty. The company listened to the roar of a discourse inspired by the restraint put upon him; restraint being that which artists cannot endure. This Rolandie

fury, this wit which slashed down all things, using epigram as its weapon, intoxicated Marie and amused the circle around them, as the sight of a bull goaded with banderols amuses the company in a Spanish circus.

"You may kick as you please, but you can't make a solitude about you," whispered Blondet.

The words brought Raoul to his senses, and he ceased to exhibit his irritation to the company. Madame d'Espard came up to offer him a cup of tea, and said loud enough for Madame de Vandenesse to hear:—

"You are certainly very amusing; come and see me sometimes at four o'clock."

The word "amusing" offended Raoul, though it was used as the ground of an invitation. Blondet took pity on him.

"My dear fellow," he said, taking him aside into a corner, "you are behaving in society as if you were at Florine's. Here no one shows annoyance, or spouts long articles; they say a few words now and then, they look their calmest when most desirous of flinging others out of the window; they sneer softly, they pretend not to think of the woman they adore, and they are careful not to roll like a donkey on the high-road. In society, my good Raoul, conventions rule love. Either carry off Madame de Vandenesse, or show yourself a gentleman. As it is, you are playing the lover in one of your own books."

Nathan listened with his head lowered; he was like a lion caught in a toil.

"I'll never set foot in this house again," he cried.

"That papier-mâché marquise sells her tea too dear. She thinks me amusing! I understand now why Saint-Just wanted to guillotine this whole class of people!"

"You'll be back here to-morrow."

Blondet was right. Passions are as mean as they are cruel. The next day after long hesitation between "I'll go — I'll not go," Raoul left his new partners in the midst of an important discussion and rushed to Madame d'Espard's house in the faubourg Saint-Honoré. Beholding Rastignac's elegant cabriolet enter the court-yard while he was paying his cab at the gate, Nathan's vanity was stung; he resolved to have a cabriolet himself, and its accompanying tiger, too. The carriage of the countess was in the courtyard, and the sight of it swelled Raoul's heart with joy. Marie was advancing under the pressure of her desires with the regularity of the hands of a clock obeying the mainspring. He found her sitting at the corner of the fireplace in the little salon. Instead of looking at Nathan when he was announced, she looked at his reflection in a mirror.

"Monsieur le ministre," said Madame d'Espard, addressing Nathan, and presenting him to de Marsay by a glance, "was maintaining, when you came in, that the royalists and the republicans have a secret understanding. You ought to know something about it; is it so?"

"If it were so," said Raoul, "where's the harm? We hate the same thing; we agree as to our hatreds, we differ only in our love. That's the whole of it."

"The alliance is odd enough," said de Marsay, giv-

ing a comprehensively meaning glance at the Comtesse Félix and Nathan.

"It won't last," said Rastignac, thinking, perhaps, wholly of politics.

"What do you think, my dear?" asked Madame d'Espard, addressing Marie.

"I know nothing of public affairs," replied the countess.

"But you soon will, madame," said de Marsay, "and then you will be doubly our enemy."

So saying he left the room with Rastignac, and Madame d'Espard accompanied them to the door of the first salon. The lovers had the room to themselves for a few moments. Marie held out her ungloved hand to Raoul, who took and kissed it as though he were eighteen years old. The eyes of the countess expressed so noble a tenderness that the tears which men of nervous temperament can always find at their service came into Raoul's eyes.

"Where can I see you? where can I speak with you?" he said. "It is death to be forced to disguise my voice, my look, my heart, my love —"

Moved by that tear Marie promised to drive daily in the Bois, unless the weather were extremely bad. This promise gave Raoul more pleasure than he had found in Florine for the last five years.

"I have so many things to say to you! I suffer from the silence to which we are condemned —"

The countess looked at him eagerly without replying, and at that moment Madame d'Espard returned to the room.

"Why didn't you answer de Marsay?" she said as she entered.

"We ought to respect the dead," replied Raoul. "Don't you see that he is dying? Rastignac is his nurse, — hoping to be put in the will."

The countess pretended to have other visits to pay, and left the house.

For this quarter of an hour Raoul had sacrificed important interests and most precious time. Marie was perfectly ignorant of the life of such men, involved in complicated affairs and burdened with exacting toil. Women of society are still under the influence of the traditions of the eighteenth century, in which all positions were definite and assured. Few women know the harassments in the life of most men who in these days have a position to make and to maintain, a fame to reach, a fortune to consolidate. Men of settled wealth and position can now be counted; old men alone have time to love; young men are rowing, like Nathan, the galleys of ambition. Women are not yet resigned to this change of customs; they suppose the same leisure of which they have too much in those who have none; they cannot imagine other occupations, other ends in life than their own. When a lover has vanquished the Lernean hydra in order to pay them a visit he has no merit in their eyes; they are only grateful to him for the pleasure he gives; they neither know nor care what it costs. Raoul became aware as he returned from this visit how difficult it would be to hold the reins of a love-affair in society, the ten-horsed chariot of journalism, his dramas on the stage, and his generally involved affairs.

"The paper will be wretched to-night," he thought,

as he walked away. "No article of mine, and only the second number, too!"

Madame Félix de Vandenesse drove three times to the Bois de Boulogne without finding Raoul; the third time she came back anxious and uneasy. The fact was that Nathan did not choose to show himself in the Bois until he could go there as a prince of the press. He employed a whole week in searching for horses, a phaeton and a suitable tiger, and in convincing his partners of the necessity of saving time so precious to them, and therefore of charging his equipage to the costs of the journal. His associates, Massol and du Tillet agreed to this so readily that he really believed them the best fellows in the world. Without this help, however, life would have been simply impossible to Raoul; as it was, it became so irksome that many men, even those of the strongest constitutions, could not have borne it. A violent and successful passion takes a great deal of space in an ordinary life; but when it is connected with a woman in the social position of Madame de Vandenesse it sucks the life out of a man as busy as Raoul. Here is a list of the obligations his passion imposed upon him.

Every day, or nearly every day, he was obliged to be on horseback in the Bois, between two and three o'clock, in the careful dress of a gentleman of leisure. He had to learn at what house or theatre he could meet Madame de Vandenesse in the evening. He was not able to leave the party or the play until long after midnight, having obtained nothing better than a few tender sentences, long awaited, said in a doorway, or

hastily as he put her into her carriage. It frequently happened that Marie, who by this time had launched him into the great world, procured for him invitations to dinner in certain houses where she went herself. All this seemed the simplest life in the world to her. Raoul moved by pride and led on by his passion never told her of his labors. He obeyed the will of this innocent sovereign, followed in her train, followed, also, the parliamentary debates, edited and wrote for his newspaper, and put upon the stage two plays, the money for which was absolutely indispensable to him. It sufficed for Madame de Vandenesse to make a little face of displeasure when he tried to excuse himself from attending a ball, a concert, or from driving in the Bois, to compel him to sacrifice his most pressing interests to her good pleasure. When he left society between one and two in the morning he went straight to work until eight or nine. He was scarcely asleep • before he was obliged to be up and concocting the opinions of his journal with the men of political influence on whom he depended, — not to speak of the thousand and one other details of the paper. Journalism is connected with everything in these days; with industrial concerns, with public and private interests, with all new enterprises, and all the schemes of literature, its self-loves, and its products.

When Nathan, harassed and fatigued, would rush from his editorial office to the theatre, from the theatre to the Chamber, from the Chamber to face certain creditors, he was forced to appear in the Bois with a calm countenance, and gallop beside Marie's carriage in the leisurely style of a man devoid of cares and

with no other duties than those of love. When in return for this toilsome and wholly ignored devotion all he won were a few sweet words, the prettiest assurances of eternal attachment, ardent pressures of the hand on the very few occasions when they found themselves alone, he began to feel he was rather duped by leaving his mistress in ignorance of the enormous costs of these "little attentions," as our fathers called them. The occasion for an explanation arrived in due time.

On a fine April morning the countess accepted Nathan's arm for a walk through a sequestered path of the Bois de Boulogne. She intended to make him one of those pretty little quarrels apropos of nothing, which women are so fond of exciting. Instead of greeting him as usual, with a smile upon her lips, her forehead illumined with pleasure, her eyes bright with some gay or delicate thought, she assumed a grave and serious aspect.

"What is the matter?" said Nathan.

"Why do you pretend to such ignorance?" she replied. "You ought to know that a woman is not a child."

"Have I displeased you?"

"Should I be here if you had?"

"But you don't smile to me; you don't seem happy to see me."

"Oh! do you mean to accuse me of sulking?" she said, looking at him with that submissive air which women assume when they want to seem victims.

Nathan walked on a few steps in a state of real apprehension which oppressed him.

"It must be," he said, after a moment's silence,

"one of those frivolous fears, those hazy suspicions which women dwell on more than they do on the great things of life. You all have a way of tipping the world sideways with a straw, a cobweb —"

"Sarcasm!" she said. "I might have expected it."

"Marie, my angel, I only said those words to wring your secret out of you."

"My secret would be always a secret, even if I told it to you."

"But all the same, tell it to me."

"I am not loved," she said, giving him one of those sly oblique glances with which women question so maliciously the men they are trying to torment.

"Not loved!" cried Nathan.

"No; you are too occupied with other things. What am I to you in the midst of them? forgotten on the least occasion! Yesterday I came to the Bois and you were not here —"

"But —"

"I had put on a new dress expressly to please you; you did not come; where were you?"

"But —"

"I did not know where. I went to Madame d'Espard's; you were not there."

"But —"

"That evening at the Opera, I watched the balcony; every time a door opened my heart was beating!"

"But —"

"What an evening I had! You don't reflect on such tempests of the heart."

"But —"

"Life is shortened by such emotions."

"But —"

"Well, what?" she said.

"You are right; life is shortened by them," said Nathan, "and in a few months you will utterly have consumed mine. Your unreasonable reproaches drag my secret from me — Ha! you say you are not loved; you are loved too well."

And thereupon he vividly depicted his position, told of his sleepless nights, his duties at certain hours, the absolute necessity of succeeding in his enterprise, the insatiable requirements of a newspaper in which he was required to judge the events of the whole world without blundering, under pain of losing his power, and so losing all, the infinite amount of rapid study he was forced to give to questions which passed as rapidly as clouds in this all-consuming age, etc., etc.

Raoul made a great mistake. The Marquise d'Espard had said to him on one occasion, "Nothing is more naïve than a first love." As he unfolded before Marie's eyes this life which seemed to her immense, the countess was overcome with admiration. She had thought Nathan grand, she now considered him sublime. She blamed herself for loving him too much; begged him to come to her only when he could do so without difficulty. Wait? indeed she could wait! In future, she should know how to sacrifice her enjoyments. Wishing to be his stepping-stone was she really an obstacle? She wept with despair.

"Women," she said, with tears in her eyes, "can only love; men act; they have a thousand ways in which they are bound to act. But we can only think, and pray, and worship."

A love that had sacrificed so much for her sake deserved a recompense. She looked about her like a nightingale descending from a leafy covert to drink at a spring, to see if she were alone in the solitude, if the silence hid no witness; then she raised her head to Raoul, who bent his own, and let him take one kiss, the first and the only one she ever gave in secret, feeling happier at that moment than she had felt in five years. Raoul thought all his toils well-paid. They both walked forward they scarcely knew where, but it was on the road to Auteuil; presently, however, they were forced to return and find their carriages, pacing together with the rhythmic step well-known to lovers. Raoul had faith in that kiss given with the quiet facility of a sacred sentiment. All the evil of it was in the mind of the world, not in that of the woman who walked beside him. Marie herself, given over to the grateful admiration which characterizes the love of woman, walked with a firm, light step on the gravelled path, saying, like Raoul, but few words; yet those few were felt and full of meaning. The sky was cloudless, the tall trees had bourgeoned, a few green shoots were already brightening their myriad of brown twigs. The shrubs, the birches, the willows, the poplars were showing their first diaphanous and tender foliage. No soul resists these harmonies. Love explained Nature as it had already explained society to Marie's heart.

"I wish you had never loved any one but me," she said.

"Your wish is realized," replied Raoul. "We have awakened in each other the only true love."

He spoke the truth as he felt it. Posing before this innocent young heart as a pure man, Raoul was caught himself by his own fine sentiments. At first purely speculative and born of vanity, his love had now become sincere. He began by lying, he had ended in speaking truth. In all writers there is ever a sentiment, difficult to stifle, which impels them to admire the highest good. The countess, on her part, after her first rush of gratitude and surprise, was charmed to have inspired such sacrifices, to have caused him to surmount such difficulties. She was beloved by a man who was worthy of her! Raoul was totally ignorant to what his imaginary grandeur bound him. Women will not suffer their idol to step down from his pedestal. They do not forgive the slightest pettiness in a god. Marie was far from knowing the solution of the riddle given by Raoul to his friends at Very's. The struggle of this writer, risen from the lower classes, had cost him the ten first years of his youth; and now in the days of his success he longed to be loved by one of the queens of the great world. Vanity, without which, as Champfort says, love would be but a feeble thing, sustained his passion and increased it day by day.

"Can you swear to me," said Marie, "that you belong and will never belong to any other woman?"

"There is neither time in my life nor place in my heart for any other woman," replied Raoul, not thinking that he told a lie, so little did he value Florine.

"I believe you," she said.

When they reached the alley where their carriages were waiting, Marie dropped Raoul's arm, and the

young man assumed a respectful and distant attitude as if he had just met her; he accompanied her, with his hat off, to her carriage, then he followed her by the Avenue Charles X., breathing in, with satisfaction, the very dust her calèche raised.

In spite of Marie's high renunciations, Raoul continued to follow her everywhere; he adored the air of mingled pleasure and displeasure with which she scolded him for wasting his precious time. She took direction of his labors, she gave him formal orders on the employment of his time; she stayed at home to deprive him of every pretext for dissipation. Every morning she read his paper, and became the herald of his staff of editors, of Étienne Lousteau the feuilletonist, whom she thought delightful, of Félicien Vernou, of Claude Vignon, — in short, of the whole staff. She advised Raoul to do justice to de Marsay when he died, and she read with deep emotion the noble eulogy which Raoul published upon the dead minister while blaming his Machiavelianism and his hatred for the masses. She was present, of course, at the Gymnase on the occasion of the first representation of the play upon the proceeds of which Nathan relied to support his enterprise, and was completely duped by the purchased applause.

"You did not bid farewell to the Italian opera," said Lady Dudley, to whose house she went after the performance.

"No, I went to the Gymnase. They gave a first representation."

"I can't endure vaudevilles. I am like Louis XIV. about Teniers," said Lady Dudley.

"For my part," said Madame d'Espard, "I think actors have greatly improved. Vaudevilles in the present day are really charming comedies, full of wit, requiring great talent; they amuse me very much."

"The actors are excellent, too," said Marie. "Those at the Gymnase played very well to-night; the piece pleased them; the dialogue was witty and keen."

"Like those of Beaumarchais," said Lady Dudley.

"Monsieur Nathan is not Molière as yet, but —" said Madame d'Espard, looking at the countess.

"He makes vaudevilles," said Madame Charles de Vandenesse.

"And unmakes ministries," added Madame de Manerville.

The countess was silent; she wanted to answer with a sharp repartee; her heart was bounding with anger, but she could find nothing better to say than, —

"He will make them, perhaps."

All the women looked at each other with mysterious significance. When Marie de Vandenesse departed Moïna de Saint-Héren exclaimed: —

"She adores him."

"And she makes no secret of it," said Madame d'Espard.

VII.

SUICIDE.

IN the month of May Vandenesse took his wife, as usual, to their country-seat, where she was consoled by the passionate letters she received from Raoul, to whom she wrote every day.

Marie's absence might have saved Raoul from the gulf into which he was falling, if Florine had been near him; but, unfortunately, he was alone in the midst of friends who had become his enemies from the moment that he showed his intention of ruling them. His staff of writers hated him *pro tem.*, ready to hold out a hand to him and console him in case of a fall, ready to adore him in case of success. So goes the world of literature. No one is really liked but an inferior. Every man's hand is against him who is likely to rise. This wide-spread envy doubles the chances of common minds who excite neither envy nor suspicion, who make their way like moles, and, fools though they be, find themselves gazetted in the "Moniteur," for three or four places, while men of talent are still struggling at the door to keep each other out.

The underhand enmity of these pretended friends, which Florine would have scented with the innate faculty of a courtesan to get at truth amid a thousand

misleading circumstances, was by no means Raoul's greatest danger. His partners, Massol the lawyer, and du Tillet the banker, had intended from the first to harness his ardor to the chariot of their own importance and get rid of him as soon as he was out of condition to feed the paper, or else to deprive him of his power, arbitrarily, whenever it suited their purpose to take it. To them Nathan represented a certain amount of talent to use up, a literary force of the motive power of ten pens to employ. Massol, one of those lawyers who mistake the faculty of endless speech for eloquence, who possess the art of boring by diffusiveness, the torment of all meetings and assemblies where they belittle everything, and who desire to become personages at any cost, — Massol no longer wanted the place as Keeper of the Seals; he had seen some five or six different men go through that office in four years, and the robes disgusted him. In exchange, his mind was now set on obtaining a chair on the Board of Education and a place in the Council of State; the whole adorned with the cross of the Legion of honor. Du Tillet and Nucingen had guaranteed the cross to him, and the office of Master of Petitions provided he obeyed them blindly.

The better to deceive Raoul, these men allowed him to manage the paper without control. Du Tillet used it only for his stock-gambling, about which Nathan understood next to nothing; but he had given, through Nucingen, an assurance to Rastignac that the paper would be tacitly obliging to the government on the sole condition of supporting his candidacy for Monsieur de Nucingen's place as soon as he was nominated peer

of France. Raoul was thus being undermined by the banker and the lawyer, who saw him with much satisfaction lording it in the newspaper, profiting by all advantages, and harvesting the fruits of self-love, while Nathan, enchanted, believed them to be, as on the occasion of his equestrian wants, the best fellows in the world. He thought he managed them! Men of imagination, to whom hope is the basis of existence, never allow themselves to know that the most perilous moment in their affairs is that when all seems going well according to their wishes.

This was a period of triumph by which Nathan profited. He appeared as a personage in the world, political and financial. Du Tillet presented him to the Nucingens. Madame de Nucingen received him cordially, less for himself than for Madame de Vandenesse; but when she ventured a few words about the countess he thought himself marvellously clever in using Florine as a shield; he alluded to his relations with the actress in a tone of generous self-conceit. How could he desert a great devotion, for the coquetries of the faubourg Saint-Germain?

Nathan, manipulated by Nucingen and Rastignac, by du Tillet and Blondet, gave his support ostentatiously to the *doctrinaires* of their new and ephemeral cabinet. But in order to show himself pure of all bribery he refused to take advantage of certain profitable enterprises which were started by means of his paper, — he! who had no reluctance in compromising friends or in behaving with little decency to mechanics under certain circumstances. Such meannesses, the result of vanity and of ambition, are found in many

lives like his. The mantle must be splendid before the eyes of the world, and we steal our friend's or a poor man's cloth to patch it.

Nevertheless, two months after the departure of the countess, Raoul had a certain Rabelaisian *quart d'heure* which caused him some anxiety in the midst of these triumphs. Du Tillet had advanced a hundred thousand francs, Florine's money had gone in the costs of the first establishment of the paper, which were enormous. It was necessary to provide for the future. The banker agreed to let the editor have fifty thousand francs on notes for four months. Du Tillet thus held Raoul by the halter of an I O U. By means of this relief the funds of the paper were secured for six months. In the eyes of some writers six months is an eternity. Besides, by dint of advertising and by offering illusory advantages to subscribers two thousand had been secured; an influx of travellers added to this semi-success, which was enough, perhaps, to excuse the throwing of more bank-bills after the rest. A little more display of talent, a timely political trial or crisis, an apparent persecution, and Raoul felt certain of becoming one of those modern *condottieri* whose ink is worth more than the powder and shot of the olden time.

This loan from du Tillet was already made when Florine returned with fifty thousand francs. Instead of creating a savings fund with that sum, Raoul, certain of success (simply because he felt it was necessary), and already humiliated at having accepted the actress's money, deceived Florine as to his actual position, and persuaded her to employ the money in refur-

nishing her house. The actress, who did not need persuasion, not only spent the sum in hand, but she burdened herself with a debt of thirty thousand francs, with which she obtained a charming little house all to herself in the rue Pigale, whither her old society resorted. Raoul had reserved the production of his great piece, in which was a part especially suited to Florine, until her return. This comedy-vaudeville was to be Raoul's farewell to the stage. The newspapers, with that good nature which costs nothing, prepared the way for such an ovation to Florine that even the Théâtre-Français talked of engaging her. The feuilletons proclaimed her the heiress of Mars.

This triumph was sufficiently dazzling to prevent Florine from carefully studying the ground on which Nathan was advancing; she lived, for the time being, in a round of festivities and glory. According to those about her, he was now a great political character; he was justified in his enterprise; he would certainly be a deputy, probably a minister in course of time, like so many others. As for Nathan himself, he firmly believed that at the next session of the Chamber he should find himself in the government with two other journalists, one of whom, already a minister, was anxious to associate some of his own craft with himself, and so consolidate his power. After a separation of six months, Nathan met Florine again with pleasure, and returned easily to his old way of life. All his comforts came from the actress, but he embroidered the heavy tissue of his life with the flowers of ideal passion; his letters to Marie were masterpieces of grace and style. Nathan made her the light

of his life; he undertook nothing without consulting his "guardian angel." In despair at being on the popular side, he talked of going over to that of the aristocracy; but, in spite of his habitual agility, even he saw the absolute impossibility of such a jump; it was easier to become a minister. Marie's precious replies were deposited in one of those portfolios with patent locks made by Huret or Fichet, two mechanics who were then waging war in advertisements and posters all over Paris, as to which could make the safest and most impenetrable locks.

This portfolio was left about in Florine's new boudoir, where Nathan did much of his work. No one is easier to deceive than a woman to whom a man is in the habit of telling everything; she has no suspicions; she thinks she sees and hears and knows all. Besides, since her return, Nathan had led the most regular of lives under her very nose. Never did she imagine that that portfolio, which she hardly glanced at as it lay there unconcealed, contained the letters of a rival, treasures of admiring love which the countess addressed, at Raoul's request, to the office of his newspaper.

Nathan's situation was, therefore, to all appearance, extremely brilliant. He had many friends. The two plays lately produced had succeeded well, and their proceeds supplied his personal wants and relieved him of all care for the future. His debt to du Tillet, "his friend," did not make him in the least uneasy.

"Why distrust a friend?" he said to Blondet, who from time to time would cast a doubt on his position, led to do so by his general habit of analyzing.

"But we don't need to distrust our enemies," remarked Florine.

Nathan defended du Tillet; he was the best, the most upright of men.

This existence, which was really that of a dancer on the tight rope without his balance-pole, would have alarmed any one, even the most indifferent, had it been seen as it really was. Du Tillet watched it with the cool eye and the cynicism of a parvenu. Through the friendly good humor of his intercourse with Raoul there flashed now and then a malignant jeer. One day, after pressing his hand in Florine's boudoir and watching him as he got into his carriage, du Tillet remarked to Lousteau (*envier par excellence*):—

"That fellow is off to the Bois in fine style to-day, but he is just as likely, six months hence, to be in a debtor's prison."

"He? never!" cried Lousteau. "He has Florine."

"How do you know that he'll keep her? As for you, who are worth a dozen of him, I predict that you will be our editor-in-chief within six months."

In October Nathan's notes to du Tillet fell due, and the banker graciously renewed them, but for two months only, with the discount added and a fresh loan. Sure of victory, Raoul was not afraid of continuing to put his hand in the bag. Madame Félix de Vandenesse was to return in a few days, a month earlier than usual, brought back, of course, by her unconquerable desire to see Nathan, who felt that he could not be short of money at a time when he renewed that assiduous life.

Correspondence, in which the pen is always bolder than speech, and thought, wreathing itself with flowers,

allows itself to be seen without disguise, had brought the countess to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. She believed she saw in Raoul one of the noblest spirits of the epoch, a delicate but misjudged heart without a stain and worthy of adoration; she saw him advancing with a brave hand to grasp the sceptre of power. Soon that speech so beautiful in love would echo from the tribune. Marie now lived only in this life of a world outside her own. Her taste was lost for the tranquil joys of home, and she gave herself up to the agitations of this whirlwind life communicated by a clever and adoring pen. She kissed Raoul's letters, written in the midst of the ceaseless battles of the press, with time taken from necessary studies; she felt their value; she was certain of being loved, and loved only, with no rival but the fame and the ambition he adored. She found enough in her country solitude to fill her soul and employ all her faculties, — happy, indeed, to have been so chosen by such a man, who to her was an angel.

During the last days of autumn Marie and Raoul again met and renewed their walks in the Bois, where alone they could see each other until the salons reopened. But when the winter fairly began, Raoul appeared in social life at his apogee. He was almost a personage. Rastignac, now out of power with the ministry, which went to pieces on the death of de Marsay, leaned upon Nathan, and gave him in return the warmest praise. Madame de Vandenesse, feeling this change in public opinion, was desirous of knowing if her husband's judgment had altered also. She questioned him again; perhaps with the hope of

obtaining one of those brilliant revenges which please all women, even the noblest and least worldly, — for may we not believe that even the angels retain some portion of their self-love as they gather in serried ranks before the Holy of Holies?

“Nothing was wanting to Raoul Nathan but to be the dupe he now is to a parcel of intriguing sharpers,” replied the count.

Félix, whose knowledge of the world and politics enabled him to judge clearly, had seen Nathan’s true position. He explained to his wife that Fieschi’s attempt had resulted in attaching to the interests threatened by this attack on Louis-Philippe a large body of hitherto lukewarm persons. The newspapers which were non-committal, and did not show their colors, would lose subscribers; for journalism, like politics, was about to be simplified by falling into regular lines. If Nathan had put his whole fortune into that newspaper he would lose it. This judgment, so apparently just and clear-cut, though brief and given by a man who fathomed a matter in which he had no interest, alarmed Madame de Vandenesse.

“Do you take an interest in him?” asked her husband.

“Only as a man whose mind interests me and whose conversation I like.”

This reply was made so naturally that the count suspected nothing.

The next day at four o’clock, Marie and Raoul had a long conversation together, in a low voice, in Madame d’Espard’s salon. The countess expressed fears which Raoul dissipated, only too happy to

destroy by epigrams the conjugal judgment. Nathan had a revenge to take. He characterized the count as narrow-minded, behind the age, a man who judged the revolution of July with the eyes of the Restoration, who would never be willing to admit the triumph of the middle-classes — the new force of all societies, whether temporary or lasting, but a real force. Instead of turning his mind to the study of an opinion given impartially and incidentally by a man well-versed in politics, Raoul mounted his stilts and stalked about in the purple of his own glory. Where is the woman who would not have believed his glowing talk sooner than the cold logic of her husband? Madame de Vandenesse, completely reassured, returned to her life of little enjoyments, clandestine pressures of the hand, occasional quarrels, — in short, to her nourishment of the year before, harmless in itself, but likely to drag a woman over the border if the man she favors is resolute and impatient of obstacles. Happily for her, Nathan was not dangerous. Besides, he was too full of his immediate self-interests to think at this time of profiting by his love.

But toward the end of December, when the second notes fell due, du Tillet demanded payment. The rich banker, who said he was embarrassed, advised Raoul to borrow the money for a short time from a usurer, from Gigonnet, the providence of all young men who were pressed for money. In January, he remarked, the renewal of subscriptions to the paper would be coming in, there would be plenty of money in hand, and they could then see what had best be done. Besides, couldn't Nathan write a play? As a matter of pride

Raoul determined to pay off the notes at once. Du Tillet gave Raoul a letter to Gigonnet, who counted out the money on a note of Nathan's at twenty days' sight. Instead of asking himself the reason of such unusual facility, Raoul felt vexed at his folly in not having asked for more. That is how men who are really remarkable for the power of thought are apt to behave in practical business; they seem to reserve the power of their mind for their writings, and are fearful of lessening it by putting it to use in the daily affairs of life.

Raoul related his morning to Florine and Blondet. He gave them an inimitable sketch of Gigonnet, his fireplace without fire, his shabby wall-paper, his stairway, his asthmatic bell, his aged straw mattress, his den without warmth, like his eye. He made them laugh about this new uncle; they neither troubled themselves about du Tillet and his pretended want of money, nor about an old usurer so ready to disburse. What was there to worry about in that?

"He has only asked you fifteen per cent," said Blondet; "you ought to be grateful to him. At twenty-five per cent you don't bow to those old fellows. This is money-lending; usury does n't begin till fifty per cent; and then you despise the usurer."

"Despise him!" cried Florine; "if any of your friends lent you the money at that price they'd pose as your benefactors."

"She is right; and I am glad I don't owe anything now to du Tillet," said Raoul.

Why this lack of penetration as to their personal affairs in men whose business it is to penetrate all

things? Perhaps the mind cannot be complete at all points; perhaps artists of every kind live too much in the present moment to study the future; perhaps they are too observant of the ridiculous to notice snares, or they may believe that none would dare to lay a snare for such as they. However this may be, the future arrived in due time. Twenty days later Raoul's notes were protested, but Florine obtained from the Court of commerce an extension of twenty-five days in which to meet them. Thus pressed, Raoul looked into his affairs and asked for the accounts, and it then appeared that the receipts of the newspaper covered only two-thirds of the expenses, while the subscriptions were rapidly dwindling. The great man now grew anxious and gloomy, but to Florine only, in whom he confided. She advised him to borrow money on unwritten plays, and write them at once, giving a lien on his work. Nathan followed this advice and obtained thereby twenty thousand francs, which reduced his debt to forty thousand.

On the 10th of February the twenty-five days expired. Du Tillet, who did not want Nathan as a rival before the electoral college, where he meant to appear himself, instigated Gigonnet to sue Nathan without compromise. A man locked up for debt could not present himself as a candidate for election. Florine was herself in communication with the sheriff on the subject of her personal debts, and no resource was left to her but the "I" of Medea, for her new furniture and belongings were now attached. The ambitious Raoul heard the cracking in all directions of his prosperous edifice, built, alas! without foundations.

His nerve failed him; too weak already to sustain so vast an enterprise, he felt himself incapable of attempting to build it up again; he was fated to perish in its ashes. Love for the countess gave him still a few thrills of life; his mask brightened for a moment, but behind it hope was dead. He did not suspect the hand of du Tillet, and laid the blame of his misfortunes on the usurer. Rastignac, Blondet, Lousteau, Vernou, Finot, and Massol took care not to enlighten him. Rastignac, who wanted to return to power, made common cause with Nucingen and du Tillet. The others felt a satisfaction in the catastrophe of an equal who had attempted to make himself their master. None of them, however, would have said a word to Florine; on the contrary, they praised Raoul to her.

"Nathan," they said, "has the shoulders of Atlas; he'll pull himself through; all will come right."

"There were two new subscribers yesterday," said Blondet, gravely. "Raoul will certainly be elected deputy. As soon as the budget is voted the dissolution is sure to take place."

But Nathan, sued, could no longer obtain even usury; Florine, with all her personal property attached, could count on nothing but inspiring a passion in some fool who might not appear at the right moment. Nathan's friends were all men without money and without credit. An arrest for debt would destroy his hopes of a political career; and besides all this, he had bound himself to do an immense amount of dramatic work for which he had already received payment. He could see no bottom to the gulf of misery that lay before him, into which he was about

to roll. In presence of such threatened evil his boldness deserted him. Would the Comtesse de Vandenesse stand by him? Would she fly with him? Women are never led into a gulf of that kind except by an absolute love, and the love of Raoul and Marie had not bound them together by the mysterious and inalienable ties of happiness. But supposing that the countess did follow him to some foreign country; she would come without fortune, despoiled of everything, and then, alas! she would merely be one more embarrassment to him. A mind of a second order, and a proud mind like that of Nathan, would be likely to see, under these circumstances, and did see, in suicide the sword to cut the Gordian knots. The idea of failure in the face of the world and that society he had so lately entered and meant to rule, of leaving the chariot of the countess and becoming once more a muddled pedestrian, was more than he could bear. Madness began to dance and whirl and shake her bells at the gates of the fantastic palace in which the poet had been dreaming. In this extremity, Nathan waited for some lucky accident, determined not to kill himself until the final moment.

During the last days employed by the legal formalities required before proceeding to arrest for debt, Raoul went about, in spite of himself, with that coldly sullen and morose expression of face which may be noticed in persons who are either fated to commit suicide or are meditating it. The funereal ideas they are turning over in their minds appear upon their foreheads in gray and cloudy tints, their smile has something fatalistic in it, their motions are solemn. These

unhappy beings seem to want to suck the last juices of the life they mean to leave; their eyes see things invisible, their ears are listening to a death-knell, they pay no attention to the minor things about them. These alarming symptoms Marie perceived one evening at Lady Dudley's. Raoul was sitting apart on a sofa in the boudoir, while the rest of the company were conversing in the salon. The countess went to the door, but he did not raise his head; he heard neither Marie's breathing nor the rustle of her silk dress; he was gazing at a flower in the carpet, with fixed eyes, stupid with grief; he felt he had rather die than abdicate. All the world can't have the rock of Saint Helena for a pedestal. Moreover, suicide was then the fashion in Paris. Is it not, in fact, the last resource of all atheistical societies? Raoul, as he sat there, had decided that the moment had come to die. Despair is in proportion to our hopes; that of Raoul had no other issue than the grave.

"What is the matter?" cried Marie, flying to him.

"Nothing," he answered.

There is one way of saying that word *nothing* between lovers which signifies its exact contrary. Marie shrugged her shoulders.

"You are a child," she said. "Some misfortune has happened to you."

"No, not to me," he replied. "But you will know all soon enough, Marie," he added, affectionately.

"What were you thinking of when I came in?" she asked, in a tone of authority.

"Do you want to know the truth?" She nodded. "I was thinking of you; I was saying to myself that

most men in my place would have wanted to be loved without reserve. I am loved, am I not?"

"Yes," she answered.

"And yet," he said, taking her round the waist and kissing her forehead at the risk of being seen, "I leave you pure and without remorse. I could have dragged you into an abyss, but you remain in all your glory on its brink without a stain. Yet one thought troubles me —"

"What is it?" she asked.

"You will despise me." She smiled superbly. "Yes, you will never believe that I have sacredly loved you; I shall be disgraced, I know that. Women never imagine that from the depths of our mire we raise our eyes to heaven and truly adore a Marie. They assail that sacred love with miserable doubts; they cannot believe that men of intellect and poesy can so detach their soul from earthly enjoyment as to lay it pure upon some cherished altar. And yet, Marie, the worship of the ideal is more fervent in men than in women; we find it in women, who do not even look for it in us."

"Why are you making me that article?" she said, jestingly.

"I am leaving France; you will hear to-morrow, how and why, from a letter my valet will bring you. Adieu, Marie."

Raoul left the house after again straining the countess to his heart with dreadful pressure, leaving her stupefied and distressed.

"What is the matter, my dear?" said Madame d'Espard, coming to look for her. "What has Mon-

sieur Nathan been saying to you? He has just left us in a most melodramatic way. Perhaps you are too reasonable or too unreasonable with him."

The countess followed Madame d'Espard back into the salon, but she left the house a few moments later, and returned home a prey to an anxiety that was wholly undefined. Unable to sleep, she passed the night in reading a journey to the North Pole, of which she understood absolutely nothing. At half-past eight in the morning she received a letter from Raoul and tore it open. The letter began with the classic words:—

"My dear, beloved Marie, when you hold this paper in your hand I shall be no more —"

She read no farther, but crumpled up the letter in her nervous clasp, rang for her maid, slipped on a morning-gown and the first shoes she could find; put on a bonnet and shawl and left the room, telling her maid to say to the count that she had gone to see her sister, Madame du Tillet.

"Where did you leave your master?" she said to Raoul's servant.

"At his office," replied the man.

"Let us go there," she said. "Come."

To the astonishment of her household she left the house on foot before nine o'clock, evidently almost beside herself. Fortunately the maid went at once to the count and told him that her mistress had received a letter from Madame du Tillet which seemed to have distressed her very much, and that she had gone out instantly, accompanied by the servant who brought the letter. Vandenesse therefore felt no uneasiness,

and awaited his wife's return to receive her explanations.

The countess got into a hackney-coach and was driven rapidly to the newspaper offices. At that hour the huge apartments which they occupied in an old mansion in the rue Feydeau were deserted; not a soul was there but the watchman, who was greatly surprised to see a young and pretty woman hurrying through the rooms in evident distress. She asked him to tell her where was Monsieur Nathan.

"At Mademoiselle Florine's, probably," replied the man, taking Marie for a rival who intended to make a scene.

"Where does he work?"

"In his office, the key of which he carries in his pocket."

"I wish to go there."

The man took her to a dark little room looking out on a rear court-yard. The office was at right angles. Opening the window of the room she was in, the countess could look through into the window of the office, and she saw Nathan sitting there in the editorial arm-chair.

"Break in the door, and be silent about all this; I'll pay you well," she said. "Don't you see that Monsieur Nathan is dying?"

The man got an iron bar from the press-room, with which he burst in the door. Raoul had actually smothered himself, like any poor work-girl, with a pan of charcoal. He had written a letter to Blondet, which lay on the table, in which he asked him to ascribe his death to apoplexy. The countess, however, had

arrived in time; she had Raoul carried to her coach, and then, not knowing where else to care for him, she took him to a hotel, engaged a room, and sent for a doctor. In a few hours Raoul was out of danger; but the countess did not leave him until she had obtained a general confession of the causes of his act. When he had poured into her heart the dreadful elegy of his woes, she said, in order to make him willing to live:—

“I can arrange all that.”

But, nevertheless, she returned home with a heart oppressed with the same anxieties and ideas that had darkened Nathan’s brow the night before.

“Well, what was the matter with your sister?” said Félix, when his wife returned. “You look distressed.”

“It is a dreadful history about which I am bound to secrecy,” she said, summoning all her nerve to appear calm before him.

In order to be alone and to think at her ease, she went to the Opera in the evening, after which she resolved to go (as we have seen) and discharge her heart into that of her sister, Madame du Tillet; relating to her the horrible scene of the morning, and begging her advice and assistance. Neither the one nor the other could then know that du Tillet himself had lighted the charcoal of the vulgar brazier, the sight of which had so justly terrified the countess.

“He has but me in all the world,” said Marie to her sister, “and I will not fail him.”

That speech contains the secret motive of most women; they can be heroic when they are certain of being all in all to a grand and irreproachable being.

VIII.

A LOVER SAVED AND LOST.

DU TILLET had heard some talk even in financial circles of the more or less possible adoration of his sister-in-law for Nathan; but he was one of those who denied it, thinking it incompatible with Raoul's known relations with Florine. The actress would certainly drive off the countess, or *vice versa*. But when, on coming home that evening, he found his sister-in-law with a perturbed face, in consultation with his wife about money, it occurred to him that Raoul had, in all probability, confided to her his situation. The countess must therefore love him; she had doubtless come to obtain from her sister the sum due to old Gigonnet. Madame du Tillet, unaware, of course, of the reasons for her husband's apparently supernatural penetration, had shown such stupefaction when he told her the sum wanted, that du Tillet's suspicions became certainties. He was sure now that he held the thread of all Nathan's possible manœuvres.

No one knew that the unhappy man himself was in bed in a small hotel in the rue du Mail, under the name of the office watchman, to whom Marie had promised five hundred francs if he kept silence as to the events of the preceding night and morning. Thus bribed, the man, whose name was François Quillet,

went back to the office and left word with the portress that Monsieur Nathan had been taken ill in consequence of overwork, and was resting. Du Tillet was therefore not surprised at Raoul's absence. It was natural for the journalist to hide under any such pretence to avoid arrest. When the sheriff's spies made inquiries they learned that a lady had carried him away in a public coach early in the morning; but it took three days to ferret out the number of the coach, question the driver, and find the hotel where the debtor was recovering his strength. Thus Marie's prompt action had really gained for Nathan a truce of four days.

Both sisters passed a cruel night. Such a catastrophe casts the lurid gleam of its charcoal over the whole of life, showing reefs, pools, depths, where the eye has hitherto seen only summits and grandeurs. Struck by the horrible picture of a young man lying back in his chair to die, with the last proofs of his paper before him, containing in type his last thoughts, poor Madame du Tillet could think of nothing else than how to save him and restore a life so precious to her sister. It is the nature of our mind to see effects before we analyze their causes. Eugénie recurred to her first idea of consulting Madame Delphine de Nucingen, with whom she was to dine, and she resolved to make the attempt, not doubting of success. Generous, like all persons who are not bound in the polished steel armor of modern society, Madame du Tillet resolved to take the whole matter upon herself.

The countess, on the other hand, happy in the thought that she had saved Raoul's life, spent the night in devising means to obtain the forty thousand

frances. In emergencies like these women are sublime; they find contrivances which would astonish thieves, business men, and usurers, if those three classes of industrials were capable of being astonished. First, the countess sold her diamonds and decided on wearing paste; then she resolved to ask the money from Vandenesse on her sister's account; but these were dishonorable means, and her soul was too noble not to recoil at them; she merely conceived them, and cast them from her. Ask money of Vandenesse to give to Nathan! She bounded in her bed with horror at such baseness. Wear false diamonds to deceive her husband! Next she thought of borrowing the money from the Rothschilds, who had so much, or from the archbishop of Paris, whose mission it was to help persons in distress; darting thus from thought to thought, seeking help in all. She deplored belonging to a class opposed to the government. Formerly, she could easily have borrowed the money on the steps of the throne. She thought of appealing to her father, the Comte de Granville. But that great magistrate had a horror of illegalities; his children knew how little he sympathized with the trials of love; he was now a misanthrope and held all affairs of the heart in horror. As for the Comtesse de Granville, she was living a retired life on one of her estates in Normandy, economizing and praying, ending her days between priests and money-bags, cold as ever to her dying moment. Even supposing that Marie had time to go to Bayeux and implore her, would her mother give her such a sum unless she explained why she wanted it? Could she say she had debts? Yes, perhaps her

mother would be softened by the wants of her favorite child. Well, then! in case all other means failed, she *would* go to Normandy. The dreadful sight of the morning, the efforts she had made to revive Nathan, the hours passed beside his pillow, his broken confession, the agony of a great soul, a vast genius stopped in its upward flight by a sordid vulgar obstacle, — all these things rushed into her memory and stimulated her love. She went over and over her emotions, and felt her love to be deeper in these days of misery than in those of Nathan's fame and grandeur. She felt the nobility of his last words said to her in Lady Dudley's boudoir. What sacredness in that farewell! What grandeur in the immolation of a selfish happiness which would have been her torture! The countess had longed for emotions, and now she had them, — terrible, cruel, and yet most precious. She lived a deeper life in pain than in pleasure. With what delight she said to herself: "I have saved him once, and I will save him again." She heard him cry out when he felt her lips upon his forehead, "Many a poor wretch does not know what love is!"

"Are you ill?" said her husband, coming into her room to take her to breakfast.

"I am dreadfully worried about a matter that is happening at my sister's," she replied, without actually telling a lie.

"Your sister has fallen into bad hands," replied Félix. "It is a shame for any family to have a du Tillet in it, — a man without honor of any kind. If disaster happened to her she would get no pity from him."

"What woman wants pity?" said the countess, with a convulsive motion. "A man's sternness is to us our only pardon."

"This is not the first time that I read your noble heart," said the count. "A woman who thinks as you do needs no watching."

"Watching!" she said; "another shame that recoils on you."

Félix smiled, but Marie blushed. When women are secretly to blame they often show ostensibly the utmost womanly pride. It is a dissimulation of mind for which we ought to be obliged to them. The deception is full of dignity, if not of grandeur. Marie wrote two lines to Nathan under the name of Monsieur Quillet, to tell him that all went well, and sent them by a street porter to the hôtel du Mail. That night, at the Opera, Félix thought it very natural that she should wish to leave her box and go to that of her sister, and he waited till du Tillet had left his wife to give Marie his arm and take her there. Who can tell what emotions agitated her as she went through the corridors and entered her sister's box with a face that was outwardly serene and calm!

"Well?" she said, as soon as they were alone.

Eugénie's face was an answer; it was bright with a joy which some persons might have attributed to the satisfaction of vanity.

"He can be saved, dear; but for three months only; during which time we must plan some other means of doing it permanently. Madame de Nucingen wants four notes of hand, each for ten thousand francs, endorsed by any one, no matter who, so as not to

compromise you. She explained to me how they were made, but I could n't understand her. Monsieur Nathan, however, can make them for us. I thought of Schmucke, our old master. I am sure he could be very useful in this emergency; he will endorse the notes. You must add to the four notes a letter in which you guarantee their payment to Madame de Nucingen, and she will give you the money to-morrow. Do the whole thing yourself; don't trust it to any one. I feel sure that Schmucke will make no objection. To divert all suspicion I told Madame de Nucingen you wanted to oblige our old music-master who was in distress, and I asked her to keep the matter secret."

"You have the sense of angels! I only hope Madame de Nucingen won't tell of it until after she gives me the money," said the countess.

"Schmucke lives in the rue de Nevers on the quai Conti; don't forget the address, and go yourself."

"Thanks!" said the countess, pressing her sister's hand. "Ah! I'd give ten years of life —"

"Out of your old age —"

"If I could put an end to these anxieties," said the countess, smiling at the interruption.

The persons who were at that moment levelling their opera-glasses at the two sisters might well have supposed them engaged in some light-hearted talk; but any observer who had come to the Opera more for the pleasure of watching faces than for mere idle amusement might have guessed them in trouble, from the anxious look which followed the momentary smiles on their charming faces.

The next morning, by half-past eight, Marie had driven to the quai Conti, stopping at the hotel du Mail on her way. The carriage could not enter the narrow rue de Nevers; but as Schmucke lived in a house at the corner of the quai she was not obliged to walk up its muddy pavement, but could jump from the step of her carriage to the broken step of the dismal old house, mended like porter's crockery, with iron rivets, and bulging out over the street in a way that was quite alarming to pedestrians. The old chapel-master lived on the fourth floor, and enjoyed a fine view of the Seine from the pont Neuf to the heights of Chaillot.

The good soul was so surprised when the countess's footman announced the visit of his former scholar that in his stupefaction he let her enter without going down to receive her. Never did the countess suspect or imagine such an existence as that which suddenly revealed itself to her eyes, though she had long known Schmucke's contempt for dress, and the little interest he felt in the affairs of this world. But who could have believed in such complete indifference, in the utter *laissez-aller* of such a life? Schmucke was a musical Diogenes, and he felt no shame whatever in his untidiness; in fact, he was so accustomed to it that he would probably have denied its existence. The incessant smoking of a stout German pipe had spread upon the ceiling and over a wretched wall-paper, scratched and defaced by the cat, a yellowish tinge. The cat, a magnificently long-furred, fluffy animal, the envy of all portresses, presided there like the mistress of the house, grave and sedate, and without anxieties.

On the top of an excellent Viennese piano he sat majestically, and cast upon the countess, as she entered, that coldly gracious look which a woman, surprised by the beauty of another woman, might have given. He did not move, and merely waved the two silver threads of his right whisker as he turned his golden eyes on Schmucke.

The piano, decrepit on its legs, though made of good wood painted black and gilded, was dirty, defaced, and scratched; and its keys, worn like the teeth of old horses, were yellowed with the fuliginous colors of the pipe. On the desk, a little heap of ashes showed that the night before Schmucke had bestrode the old instrument to some musical Walhalla. The floor, covered with dried mud, torn papers, tobacco-dust, fragments indescribable, was like that of a boy's school-room, unswept for a week, on which a mound of things accumulate, half rags, half filth.

A more practised eye than that of the countess would have seen certain other revelations of Schmucke's mode of life, — chestnut-peels, apple-parings, egg-shells dyed red in broken dishes smeared with sauer-kraut. This German detritus formed a carpet of dusty filth which crackled under foot, joining company near the hearth with a mass of cinders and ashes descending majestically from the fireplace, where lay a block of coal, before which two slender twigs made a show of burning. On the chimney-piece was a mirror in a painted frame, adorned with figures dancing a saraband; on one side hung the glorious pipe, on the other was a Chinese jar in which the musician kept his tobacco. Two arm-chairs bought at auc-

tion, a thin and rickety cot, a worm-eaten bureau without a top, a maimed table on which lay the remains of a frugal breakfast, made up a set of household belongings as plain as those of an Indian wigwam. A shaving-glass, suspended to the fastening of a curtainless window, and surmounted by a rag striped by many wipings of a razor, indicated the only sacrifices paid by Schmucke to the Graces and society. The cat, being the feeblcr and protected partner, had rather the best of the establishment; he enjoyed the comforts of an old sofa-cushion, near which could be seen a white china cup and plate. But what no pen can describe was the state into which Schmucke, the cat, and the pipe, that existing trinity, had reduced these articles. The pipe had burned the table. The cat and Schmucke's head had greased the green Utrecht velvet of the two arm-chairs and reduced it to a slimy texture. If it had not been for the cat's magnificent tail, which played a useful part in the household, the uncovered places on the bureau and the piano would never have been dusted. In one corner of the room were a pile of shoes which need an epic to describe them. The top of the bureau and that of the piano were encumbered by music-books with ragged backs and whitened corners, through which the pasteboard showed its many layers. Along the walls the names and addresses of pupils written on scraps of paper were stuck on by wafers, — the number of wafers without paper indicating the number of pupils no longer taught. On the wall-papers were many calculations written with chalk. The bureau was decorated with beer-mugs used the night before, their newness ap-

pearing very brilliant in the midst of this rubbish of dirt and age. Hygiene was represented by a jug of water with a towel laid upon it, and a bit of common soap. Two ancient hats hung to their respective nails, near which also hung the self-same blue box-coat with three capes, in which the countess had always seen Schmucke when he came to give his lessons. On the window-sill were three pots of flowers, German flowers, no doubt, and near them a stout holly-wood stick.

Though Marie's sight and smell were disagreeably affected, Schmucke's smile and glance disguised these abject miseries by rays of celestial light which actually illuminated their smoky tones and vivified the chaos. The soul of this dear man, which saw and revealed so many things divine, shone like the sun. His laugh, so frank, so guileless at seeing one of his Saint-Cecilians, shed sparkles of youth and gayety and innocence about him. The treasures he poured from the inner to the outer were like a mantle with which he covered his squalid life. The most supercilious parvenu would have felt it ignoble to care for the frame in which this glorious old apostle of the musical religion lived and moved and had his being.

"Hey! by what good luck do I see you here, dear Madame la comtesse?" he said. "Must I sing the canticle of Simeon at my age?" (This idea so tickled him that he laughed immoderately.) "'Truly I'm *en bonne fortune*.'" (And again he laughed like a merry child). "But, ah!" he said, changing to melancholy, you come for the music, and not for a poor old man like me. Yes, I know that; but come for what you will, I am yours, you know, body and soul and all I have!"

This was said in his unspeakable German accent, a rendition of which we spare the reader.

He took the countess's hand, kissed it and left a tear there, for the worthy soul was always on the morrow of her benefit. Then he seized a bit of chalk, jumped on a chair in front of the piano, and wrote upon the wall in big letters, with the rapidity of a young man, "February 17th, 1835." This pretty, artless action, done in such a passion of gratitude, touched the countess to tears.

"My sister will come, too," she said.

"The other, too! When? when? God grant it be before I die!"

"She will come to thank you for a great service I am now here to ask of you."

"Quick! quick! tell me what it is," cried Schmucke. "What must I do? go to the devil?"

"Nothing more than to write the words 'Accepted for ten thousand francs,' and sign your name on each of these papers," she said, taking from her muff four notes prepared for her by Nathan.

"Hey! that's soon done," replied the German, with the docility of a lamb; "only I'm sure I don't know where my pens and ink are — Get away from there, Meinherr Mirr!" he cried to the cat, which looked composedly at him. "That's my cat," he said, showing him to the countess. "That's the poor animal that lives with poor Schmucke. Has n't he fine fur?"

"Yes," said the countess.

"Will you have him?" he cried.

"How can you think of such a thing?" she answered. "Why, he's your friend!"

The cat, who hid the inkstand behind him, divined that Schmucke wanted it, and jumped to the bed.

“He ’s as mischievous as a monkey,” said Schmucke. “I call him *Mirr* in honor of our great Hoffmann of Berlin, whom I knew well.”

The good man signed the papers with the innocence of a child who does what his mother orders without question, so sure is he that all is right. He was thinking much more of presenting the cat to the countess than of the papers by which his liberty might be, according to the laws relating to foreigners, forever sacrificed.

“You assure me that these little papers with the stamps on them —”

“Don’t be in the least uneasy,” said the countess.

“I am not uneasy,” he said, hastily. “I only meant to ask if these little papers will give pleasure to Madame du Tillet.”

“Oh, yes,” she said, “you are doing her a service, as if you were her father.”

“I am happy, indeed, to be of any good to her — Come and listen to my music!” and leaving the papers on the table, he jumped to his piano.

The hands of this angel ran along the yellowing keys, his glance was rising to heaven, regardless of the roof; already the air of some blessed climate permeated the room and the soul of the old musician; but the countess did not allow the artless interpreter of things celestial to make the strings and the worn wood speak, like Raffaele’s Saint Cecilia, to the listening angels. She quickly slipped the notes into her muff and recalled her radiant master from the

“The hands of this angel ran along the yellowing keys.”

ethereal spheres to which he soared, by laying her hand upon his shoulder.

"My good Schmucke —" she said.

"Going already?" he cried. "Ah! why did you come?"

He did not murmur, but he sat up like a faithful dog who listens to his mistress.

"My good Schmucke," she repeated, "this is a matter of life and death; minutes can save tears, perhaps blood."

"Always the same!" he said. "Go, angel! dry the tears of others. Your poor Schmucke thinks more of your visit than of your gifts."

"But we must see each other often," she said. "You must come and dine and play to me every Sunday, or we shall quarrel. Remember, I shall expect you next Sunday."

"Really and truly?"

"Yes, I entreat you; and my sister will want you, too, for another day."

"Then my happiness will be complete," he said; "for I only see you now in the Champs Élysées as you pass in your carriage, and that is very seldom."

This thought dried the tears in his eyes as he gave his arm to his beautiful pupil, who felt the old man's heart beat violently.

"You think of us?" she said.

"Always as I eat my food," he answered, — "as my benefactresses; but chiefly as the first young girls worthy of love whom I ever knew."

So respectful, faithful, and religious a solemnity was in this speech that the countess dared say no

more. That smoky chamber, full of dirt and rubbish, was the temple of two divinities.

"There we are loved — and truly loved," she thought.

The emotion with which old Schmucke saw the countess get into her carriage and leave him she fully shared, and she sent him from the tips of her fingers one of those pretty kisses which women give each other from afar. Receiving it, the old man stood planted on his feet for a long time after the carriage had disappeared.

A few moments later the countess entered the courtyard of the hôtel de Nucingen. Madame de Nucingen was not yet up; but anxious not to keep a woman of the countess's position waiting, she hastily threw on a shawl and wrapper.

"My visit concerns a charitable action, madame," said the countess, "or I would not disturb you at so early an hour."

"But I am only too happy to be disturbed," said the banker's wife, taking the notes and the countess's guarantee. She rang for her maid.

"Thérèse," she said, "tell the cashier to bring me up himself, immediately, forty thousand francs."

Then she locked into a table drawer the guarantee given by Madame de Vandenesse, after sealing it up.

"You have a delightful room," said the countess.

"Yes, but Monsieur de Nucingen is going to take it from me. He is building a new house."

"You will doubtless give this one to your daughter, who, I am told, is to marry Monsieur de Rastignac."

The cashier appeared at this moment with the

money. Madame de Nucingen took the bank-bills and gave him the notes of hand.

"That balances," she said.

"Except the discount," replied the cashier. "Ha, Schmucke; that's the musician of Anspach," he added, examining the signatures in a suspicious manner that made the countess tremble.

"Who is doing this business?" said Madame de Nucingen, with a haughty glance at the cashier. "This is my affair."

The cashier looked alternately at the two ladies, but he could discover nothing on their impenetrable faces.

"Go, leave us — Have the kindness to wait a few moments that the people in the bank may not connect you with this negotiation," said Madame de Nucingen to the countess.

"I must ask you to add to all your other kindness that of keeping this matter secret," said Madame de Vandenesse.

"Most assuredly, since it is for a charity," replied the baroness, smiling. "I will send your carriage round to the garden gate, so that no one will see you leave the house."

"You have the thoughtful grace of a person who has suffered," said the countess.

"I do not know if I have grace," said the baroness; "but I have suffered much. I hope that your anxieties cost less than mine."

When a man has laid a plot like that du Tillet was scheming against Nathan, he confides it to no man. Nucingen knew something of it, but his wife knew

nothing. The baroness, however, aware that Raoul was embarrassed, was not the dupe of the two sisters; she guessed into whose hands that money was to go, and she was delighted to oblige the countess; moreover, she felt a deep compassion for all such embarrassments. Rastignac, so placed that he was able to fathom the manœuvres of the two bankers, came to breakfast that morning with Madame de Nucingen.

Delphine and Rastignac had no secrets from each other; and the baroness related to him her scene with the countess. Eugène, who had never supposed that Delphine could be mixed up in the affair, which was only accessory to his eyes, — one means among many others, — opened her eyes to the truth. She had probably, he told her, destroyed du Tillet's chances of election, and rendered useless the intrigues and deceptions of the past year. In short, he put her in the secret of the whole affair, advising her to keep absolute silence as to the mistake she had just committed.

"Provided the cashier does not tell Nucingen," she said.

A few moments after mid-day, while du Tillet was breakfasting, Monsieur Gigonnet was announced.

"Let him come in," said the banker, though his wife was at table. "Well, my old Shylock, is our man locked up?"

"No."

"Why not? Did n't I give you the address, rue du Mail, hôtel —"

"He has paid up," said Gigonnet, drawing from his wallet a pile of bank-bills. Du Tillet looked furious.

"You should never frown at money," said his impassible associate; "it brings ill-luck."

"Where did you get that money, madame?" said du Tillet, suddenly turning upon his wife with a look which made her color to the roots of her hair.

"I don't know what your question means," she said.

"I will fathom this mystery," he cried, springing furiously up. "You have upset my most cherished plans."

"You are upsetting your breakfast," said Gigonnet, arresting the table-cloth, which was dragged by the skirt of du Tillet's dressing-gown.

Madame du Tillet rose to leave the room, for her husband's words alarmed her. She rang the bell, and a footman entered.

"The carriage," she said. "And call Virginie; I wish to dress."

"Where are you going?" exclaimed du Tillet.

"Well-bred husbands do not question their wives," she answered. "I believe that you lay claim to be a gentleman."

"I don't recognize you ever since you have seen more of your impertinent sister."

"You ordered me to be impertinent, and I am practising on you," she replied.

"Your servant, madame," said Gigonnet, taking leave, not anxious to witness this family scene.

Du Tillet looked fixedly at his wife, who returned the look without lowering her eyes.

"What does all this mean?" he said.

"It means that I am no longer a little girl whom you can frighten," she replied. "I am, and shall be,

all my life, a good and loyal wife to you; you may be my master if you choose, my tyrant, never!"

Du Tillet left the room. After this effort Marie-Eugénie broke down.

"If it were not for my sister's danger," she said to herself, "I should never have dared to brave him thus; but, as the proverb says, 'There's some good in every evil.'"

IX.

THE HUSBAND'S TRIUMPH.

DURING the preceding night Madame du Tillet had gone over in her mind her sister's revelations. Sure, now, of Nathan's safety, she was no longer influenced by the thought of an imminent danger in that direction. But she remembered the vehement energy with which the countess had declared that she would fly with Nathan if that would save him. She saw that the man might determine her sister in some paroxysm of gratitude and love to take a step which was nothing short of madness. There were recent examples in the highest society of just such flights which paid for doubtful pleasures by lasting remorse and the disrepute of a false position. Du Tillet's speech brought her fears to a point; she dreaded lest all should be discovered; she knew her sister's signature was in Nucingen's hands, and she resolved to entreat Marie to save herself by confessing all to Félix.

She drove to her sister's house, but Marie was not at home. Félix was there. A voice within her cried aloud to Eugénie to save her sister; the morrow might be too late. She took a vast responsibility upon herself, but she resolved to tell all to the count. Surely he would be indulgent when he knew that his honor was still safe. The countess was deluded rather

than sinful. Eugénie feared to be treacherous and base in revealing secrets that society (agreeing on this point) holds to be inviolable; but—she saw her sister's future, she trembled lest she should some day be deserted, ruined by Nathan, poor, suffering, disgraced, wretched, and she hesitated no longer; she sent in her name and asked to see the count.

Félix, astonished at the visit, had a long conversation with his sister-in-law, in which he seemed so calm, so completely master of himself, that she feared he might have taken some terrible resolution.

"Do not be uneasy," he said, seeing her anxiety. "I will act in a manner which shall make your sister bless you. However much you may dislike to keep the fact that you have spoken to me from her knowledge, I must entreat you to do so. I need a few days to search into mysteries which you don't perceive; and, above all, I must act cautiously. Perhaps I can learn all in a day. I, alone, my dear sister, am the guilty person. All lovers play their game, and it is not every woman who is able, unassisted, to see life as it is."

Madame du Tillet returned home comforted. Félix de Vandenesse drew forty thousand francs from the Bank of France, and went direct to Madame de Nucingen. He found her at home, thanked her for the confidence she had placed in his wife, and returned the money, explaining that the countess had obtained this mysterious loan for her charities, which were so profuse that he was trying to put a limit to them.

"Give me no explanations, monsieur, since Madame de Vandenesse has told you all," said the Baronne de Nucingen.

"She knows the truth," thought Vandenesse.

Madame de Nucingen returned to him Marie's letter of guarantee and sent to the bank for the four notes. Vandenesse, during the short time that these arrangements kept him waiting, watched the baroness with the eye of a statesman, and he thought the moment propitious for further negotiation.

"We live in an age, madame, when nothing is sure," he said. "Even thrones rise and fall in France with fearful rapidity. Fifteen years have wreaked their will on a great empire, a monarchy, and a revolution. No one can now dare to count upon the future. You know my attachment to the cause of legitimacy. Suppose some catastrophe; would you not be glad to have a friend in the conquering party?"

"Undoubtedly," she said, smiling.

"Very good; then, will you have in me, secretly, an obliged friend who could be of use to Monsieur de Nucingen in such a case, by supporting his claim to the peerage he is seeking?"

"What do you want of me?" she asked.

"Very little," he replied. "All that you know about Nathan's affairs."

The baroness repeated to him her conversation with Rastignac, and said, as she gave him the four notes, which the cashier had meantime brought to her:

"Don't forget your promise."

So little did Vandenesse forget this illusive promise that he used it again on Baron Eugène de Rastignac to obtain from him certain other information. Leaving Rastignac's apartments, he dictated to a street-amanuensis the following note to Florine.

"If Mademoiselle Florine wishes to know of a part she may play she is requested to come to the masked opera at the Opera next Sunday night, accompanied by Monsieur Nathan."

To this ball he determined to take his wife and let her own eyes enlighten her as to the relations between Nathan and Florine. He knew the jealous pride of the countess; he wanted to make her renounce her love of her own will, without causing her to blush before him, and then to return to her her own letters, sold by Florine, from whom he expected to be able to buy them. This judicious plan, rapidly conceived and partly executed, might fail through some trick of chance which meddles with all things here below.

After dinner that evening, Félix brought the conversation round to the masked balls of the Opera, remarking that Marie had never been to one, and proposing that she should accompany him the following evening.

"I'll find you some one to *intriguer*," he said.

"Ah! I wish you would," she replied.

"To do the thing well, a woman ought to fasten upon some good prey, some celebrity, a man of enough wit to give and take. There's Nathan; will you have him? I know, through a friend of Florine, certain secrets of his which would drive him crazy."

"Florine?" said the countess. "Do you mean the actress?"

Marie had already heard that name from the lips of the watchman Quillet; it now shot like a flash of lightning through her soul.

"Yes, his mistress," replied the count. "What is there so surprising in that?"

"I thought Monsieur Nathan too busy to have a mistress. Do authors have time to make love?"

"I don't say they love, my dear, but they are forced to *lodge* somewhere, like other men, and when they haven't a home of their own they *lodge* with their mistresses; which may seem to you rather loose, but it is far more agreeable than lodging in a prison."

Fire was less red than Marie's cheeks.

"Will you have him for a victim? I can help you to terrify him," continued the count, not looking at his wife's face. "I'll put you in the way of proving to him that he is being tricked like a child by your brother-in-law du Tillet. That wretch is trying to put Nathan in prison so as to make him ineligible to stand against him in the electoral college. I know, through a friend of Florine, the exact sum derived from the sale of her furniture, which she gave to Nathan to found his newspaper; I know, too, what she sent him out of her summer's harvest in the departments and in Belgium, — money which has really gone to the profit of du Tillet, Nucingen, and Massol. All three of them, unknown to Nathan, have privately sold the paper to the new ministry, so sure are they of ejecting him."

"Monsieur Nathan is incapable of accepting money from an actress."

"You don't know that class of people, my dear," said the count. "He would not deny the fact if you asked him."

"I will certainly go to the ball," said the countess.

"You will be very much amused," replied Vandenesse. "With such weapons in hand you can cut Nathan's complacency to the quick, and you will also

do him a great service. You will put him in a fury; he'll try to be calm, though inwardly fuming; but, all the same, you will enlighten a man of talent as to the peril in which he really stands; and you will also have the satisfaction of laming the horses of the *juste-milieu* in their stalls — But you are not listening to me, my dear."

"On the contrary, I am listening intently," she said. "I will tell you later why I feel desirous to know the truth of all this."

"You shall know it," said Vandenesse. "If you stay masked I will take you to supper with Nathan and Florine; it would be rather amusing for a woman of your rank to fool an actress after bewildering the wits of a clever man about these important facts; you can harness them both to the same hoax. I'll make some inquiries about Nathan's infidelities, and if I discover any of his recent adventures you shall enjoy the sight of a courtesan's fury; it is magnificent. Florine will boil and foam like an Alpine torrent; she adores Nathan; he is everything to her; she clings to him like flesh to the bones or a lioness to her cubs. I remember seeing, in my youth, a celebrated actress (who wrote like a scullion) when she came to a friend of mine to demand her letters. I have never seen such a sight again, such calm fury, such insolent majesty, such savage self-control — Are you ill, Marie?"

"No; they have made too much fire." The countess turned away and threw herself on a sofa. Suddenly, with an unforeseen movement, impelled by the horrible anguish of her jealousy, she rose on her trembling legs, crossed her arms, and came slowly to her husband.

"What do you know?" she asked. "You are not a man to torture me; you would crush me without making me suffer if I were guilty."

"What do you expect me to know, Marie?"

"Well! about Nathan."

"You think you love him," he replied; "but you love a phantom made of words."

"Then you know —"

"All," he said.

The word fell on Marie's head like the blow of a club.

"If you wish it, I will know nothing," he continued. "You are standing on the brink of a precipice, my child, and I must draw you from it. I have already done something. See!"

He drew from his pocket her letter of guarantee and the four notes endorsed by Schmucke, and let the countess recognize them; then he threw them into the fire.

"What would have happened to you, my poor Marie, three months hence?" he said. "The sheriffs would have taken you to a public court-room. Don't bow your head, don't feel humiliated; you have been the dupe of noble feelings; you have coquetted with poesy, not with a man. All women — all, do you hear me, Marie? — would have been seduced in your position. How absurd we should be, we men, we who have committed a thousand follies through a score of years, if we were not willing to grant you one imprudence in a lifetime! God keep me from triumphing over you or from offering you a pity you repelled so vehemently the other day. Perhaps that unfortunate man was

sincere when he wrote to you, sincere in attempting to kill himself, sincere in returning that same night to Florine. Men are worth less than women. It is not for my own sake that I speak at this moment, but for yours. I am indulgent, but the world is not; it shuns a woman who makes a scandal. Is that just? I know not; but this I know, the world is cruel. Society refuses to calm the woes itself has caused; it gives its honors to those who best deceive it; it has no recompense for rash devotion. I see and know all that. I can't reform society, but this I can do, I can protect you, Marie, against yourself. This matter concerns a man who has brought you trouble only, and not one of those high and sacred loves which do, at times, command our abnegation, and even bear their own excuse. Perhaps I have been wrong in not varying your happiness, in not providing you with gayer pleasures, travel, amusements, distractions for the mind. Besides, I can explain to myself the impulse that has driven you to a celebrated man, by the jealous envy you have roused in certain women. Lady Dudley, Madame d'Espard, and my sister-in-law Émilie count for something in all this. Those women, against whom I ought to have put you more thoroughly on your guard, have cultivated your curiosity more to trouble me and cause me unhappiness, than to fling you into a whirlpool which, as I believe, you would never have entered."

As she listened to these words, so full of kindness, the countess was torn by many conflicting feelings; but the storm within her breast was ruled by one of them,— a keen admiration for her husband. Proud and

noble souls are prompt to recognize the delicacy with which they are treated. Tact is to sentiments what grace is to the body. Marie appreciated the grandeur of the man who bowed before a woman in fault, that he might not see her blush. She ran from the room like one beside herself, but instantly returned, fearing lest her hasty action might cause him uneasiness.

"Wait," she said, and disappeared again.

Félix had ably prepared her excuse, and he was instantly rewarded for his generosity. His wife returned with Nathan's letters in her hand, and gave them to him.

"Judge me," she said, kneeling down beside him.

"Are we able to judge where we love?" he answered, throwing the letters into the fire; for he felt that later his wife might not forgive him for having read them. Marie, with her head upon his knee, burst into tears.

"My child," he said, raising her head, "where are your letters?"

At this question the poor woman no longer felt the intolerable burning of her cheeks; she turned cold.

"That you may not suspect me of calumniating a man whom you think worthy of you, I will make Florine herself return you those letters."

"Oh! Surely he would give them back to me himself."

"Suppose that he refused to do so?"

The countess dropped her head.

"The world disgusts me," she said. "I don't want to enter it again. I want to live alone with you, if you forgive me."

"But you might be bored again. Besides, what would the world say if you left it so abruptly? In the spring we will travel; we will go to Italy, and all over Europe; you shall see life. But to-morrow night we must go to the Opera-ball; there is no other way to get those letters without compromising you; besides, by giving them up, Florine will prove to you her power."

"And must I see that?" said the countess, frightened.

"To-morrow night."

The next evening, about midnight, Nathan was walking about the foyer of the Opera with a mask on his arm, to whom he was attending in a sufficiently conjugal manner. Presently two masked women came up to him.

"You poor fool! Marie is here and is watching you," said one of them, who was Vandenesse, disguised as a woman.

"If you choose to listen to me I will tell you secrets that Nathan is hiding from you," said the other woman, who was the countess, to Florine.

Nathan had abruptly dropped Florine's arm to follow the count, who adroitly slipped into the crowd and was out of sight in a moment. Florine followed the countess, who sat down on a seat close at hand, to which the count, doubling on Nathan, returned almost immediately to guard his wife.

"Explain yourself, my dear," said Florine, "and don't think I shall stand this long. No one can tear Raoul from me, I'll tell you that; I hold him by habit, and that's even stronger than love."

"In the first place, are you Florine?" said the count, speaking in his natural voice.

"A pretty question! if you don't know that, my joking friend, why should I believe you?"

"Go and ask Nathan, who has left you to look for his other mistress, where he passed the night, three days ago. He tried to kill himself without a word to you, my dear, — and all for want of money. That shows how much you know about the affairs of a man whom you say you love, and who leaves you without a penny, and kills himself, — or, rather, does n't kill himself, for he misses it. Suicides that don't kill are about as absurd as a duel without a scratch."

"That's a lie," said Florine. "He dined with me that very day. The poor fellow had the sheriff after him; he was hiding, as well he might."

"Go and ask at the hôtel du Mail, rue du Mail, if he was not taken there that morning, half dead of the fumes of charcoal, by a handsome young woman with whom he has been in love over a year. Her letters are at this moment under your very nose in your own house. If you want to teach Nathan a good lesson, let us all three go there; and I'll show you, papers in hand, how you can save him from the sheriff and Clichy if you choose to be the good girl that you are."

"Try that on others than Florine, my little man. I am certain that Nathan has never been in love with any one but me."

"On the contrary, he has been in love with a woman in society for over a year —"

"A woman in society, he!" cried Florine. "I don't trouble myself about such nonsense as that."

"Well, do you want me to make him come and tell you that he will not take you home from here to-night."

"If you can make him tell me that," said Florine, "I'll take *you* home, and we'll look for those letters, which I shall believe in when I see them, and not till then. He must have written them while I slept."

"Stay here," said Félix, "and watch."

So saying, he took the arm of his wife and moved to a little distance. Presently, Nathan, who had been hunting up and down the foyer like a dog looking for its master, returned to the spot where the mask had addressed him. Seeing on his face an expression he could not conceal, Florine placed herself like a post in front of him, and said, imperiously:—

"I don't wish you to leave me again; I have my reasons for this."

The countess then, at the instigation of her husband, went up to Raoul and said in his ear, —

"Marie. Who is this woman? Leave her at once, and meet me at the foot of the grand staircase."

In this difficult extremity Raoul dropped Florine's arm, and though she caught his own and held it forcibly, she was obliged, after a moment, to let him go. Nathan disappeared into the crowd.

"What did I tell you?" said Félix in Florine's astonished ears, offering her his arm.

"Come," she said; "whoever you are, come. Have you a carriage here?"

For all answer, Vandenesse hurried Florine away, followed by his wife. A few moments later the three

masks, driven rapidly by the Vandenesse coachman, reached Florine's house. As soon as she had entered her own apartments the actress unmasked. Madame de Vandenesse could not restrain a quiver of surprise at Florine's beauty as she stood there choking with anger, and superb in her wrath and jealousy.

"There is, somewhere in these rooms," said Vandenesse, "a portfolio, the key of which you have never had; the letters are probably in it."

"Well, well, for once in my life I am bewildered; you know something that I have been uneasy about for some days," cried Florine, rushing into the study in search of the portfolio.

Vandenesse saw that his wife was turning pale beneath her mask. Florine's apartment revealed more about the intimacy of the actress and Nathan than any ideal mistress would wish to know. The eye of a woman can take in the truth of such things in a second, and the countess saw vestiges of Nathan which proved to her the certainty of what Vandenesse had said. Florine returned with the portfolio.

"How am I to open it?" she said.

The actress rang the bell and sent into the kitchen for the cook's knife. When it came she brandished it in the air, crying out in ironical tones:—

"With this they cut the necks of *poulets*."

The words, which made the countess shiver, explained to her, even better than her husband had done the night before, the depths of the abyss into which she had so nearly fallen.

"What a fool I am!" said Florine; "his razor will do better."

She fetched one of Nathan's razors from his dressing-table, and slit the leather cover of the portfolio, through which Marie's letters dropped. Florine snatched one up hap-hazard, and looked it over.

"Yes, she must be a well-bred woman. It looks to me as if there were no mistakes in spelling here."

The count gathered up the letters hastily and gave them to his wife, who took them to a table as if to see that they were all there.

"Now," said Vandenesse to Florine, "will you let me have those letters for these?" showing her five bank-bills of ten thousand francs each. "They'll replace the sums you have paid for him."

"Ah!" cried Florine, "did n't I kill myself body and soul in the provinces to get him money,—I, who'd have cut my hand off to serve him? But that's men! damn your soul for them and they'll march over you rough-shod! He shall pay me for this!"

Madame de Vandenesse was disappearing with the letters.

"Hi! stop, stop, my fine mask!" cried Florine; "leave me one to confound him with."

"Not possible," said Vandenesse.

"Why not?"

"That mask is your ex-rival; but you need n't fear her now."

"Well, she might have had the grace to say thank you," cried Florine.

"But you have the fifty thousand francs instead," said Vandenesse, bowing to her.

It is extremely rare for young men, when driven to suicide, to attempt it a second time if the first fails.

When it does n't cure life, it cures all desire for voluntary death. Raoul felt no disposition to try it again when he found himself in a more painful position than that from which he had just been rescued. He tried to see the countess and explain to her the nature of his love, which now shone more vividly in his soul than ever. But the first time they met in society, Madame de Vandenesse gave him that fixed and contemptuous look which at once and forever puts an impassable gulf between a man and a woman. In spite of his natural assurance, Nathan never dared, during the rest of the winter, either to speak to the countess or even approach her.

But he opened his heart to Blondet; to him he talked of his Laura and his Beatrice, apropos of Madame de Vandenesse. He even made a paraphrase of the following beautiful passage from the pen of Théophile Gautier, one of the most remarkable poets of our day: —

“ ‘ Ideala, flower of heaven's own blue, with heart of gold, whose fibrous roots, softer, a thousandfold, than fairy tresses, strike to our souls and drink their purest essence; flower most sweet and bitter! thou canst not be torn away without the heart's blood flowing, without thy bruised stems sweating with scarlet tears. Ah! cursèd flower, why didst thou grow within my soul? ’ ”

“My dear fellow,” said Blondet, “you are raving. I'll grant it was a pretty flower, but it was n't a bit ideal, and instead of singing like a blindman before an empty niche, you had much better wash your hands and make submission to the powers. You are too much of an artist ever to be a good politician; you

have been fooled by men of not one-half your value. Think about being fooled again — but elsewhere.”

“Marie cannot prevent my loving her,” said Nathan; “she shall be my Beatrice.”

“Beatrice, my good Raoul, was a little girl twelve years of age when Dante last saw her; otherwise, she would not have been Beatrice. To make a divinity, it won’t do to see her one day wrapped in a mantle, and the next with a low dress, and the third on the boulevard, cheapening toys for her last baby. When a man has Florine, who is in turn duchess, bourgeoisie, negress, marquise, colonel, Swiss peasant, virgin of the sun in Peru (only way she can play the part), I don’t see why he should go rambling after fashionable women.”

Du Tillet, to use a Bourse term, *executed* Nathan, who, for lack of money, gave up his place on the newspaper; and the celebrated man received but five votes in the electoral college where the banker was elected.

When, after a long and happy journey in Italy, the Comtesse de Vandenesse returned to Paris late in the following winter, all her husband’s predictions about Nathan were justified. He had taken Blondet’s advice and negotiated with the government, which employed his pen. His personal affairs were in such disorder that one day, on the Champs-Élysées, Marie saw her former adorer on foot, in shabby clothes, giving his arm to Florine. When a man becomes indifferent to the heart of a woman who has once loved him, he often seems to her very ugly, even horrible, especially when he resembles Nathan. Madame de Vandenesse had a sense of personal humiliation in the thought that she

had once cared for him. If she had not already been cured of all extra-conjugal passion, the contrast then presented by the count to this man, grown less and less worthy of public favor, would have sufficed her.

To-day the ambitious Nathan, rich in ink and poor in will, has ended by capitulating entirely, and has settled down into a sinecure, like any other commonplace man. After lending his pen to all disorganizing efforts, he now lives in peace under the protecting shade of a ministerial organ. The cross of the Legion of honor, formerly the fruitful text of his satire, adorns his button-hole. "Peace at any price," ridicule of which was the stock-in-trade of his revolutionary editorship, is now the topic of his laudatory articles. Heredity, attacked by him in Saint-Simonian phrases, he now defends with solid arguments. This illogical conduct has its origin and its explanation in the change of front performed by many men besides Raoul during our recent political evolutions.

A COMMISSION IN LUNACY.

A COMMISSION IN LUNACY.

DEDICATED TO MONSIEUR LE CONTRE-AMIRAL BAZOCHE,
GOVERNOR OF THE ÎLE BOURBON.

BY THE GRATEFUL AUTHOR,

DE BALZAC.

I.

TWO OLD FRIENDS.

IN 1828, about one o'clock in the morning, two men left a handsome house in the faubourg Saint-Honoré, not far from the Élysée-Bourbon. One was the celebrated doctor, Horace Bianchon; the other, one of the most elegant men in Paris, the Baron de Rastignac; friends of long standing. Each had sent away his carriage, and no cabs were to be seen in the faubourg; but the night was fine and the pavements were dry.

"Let us go on foot to the boulevard," said Eugène de Rastignac. "You'll find a cab at the club; they are always there till morning; and you can walk nearly home with me."

"Very good."

"Well, my dear fellow, what think you?"

"Of that woman?" asked the doctor, coldly.

"I recognize my Bianchon," cried Rastignac.

"How so?"

"You speak of the Marquise d'Espard as if she were a patient to put in your hospital."

"Do you want to know what I think, Eugène? I think that if you leave Madame de Nucingen for that marquise you'll exchange your one-eyed horse for a blind one."

"Madame de Nucingen is thirty-six years old."

"And the other woman thirty-three," replied the doctor, quickly.

"Her worst enemies call her twenty-six."

"My dear fellow, when you have an interest in knowing a woman's age look at her temples and the end of her nose. No matter what else women may do with their cosmetics, they can't alter those incorruptible witnesses to their agitated lives. Every year has left its stigmata there. When the temples of a woman look drawn, lined, faded in a certain way, when the tip of her nose has those little specks which resemble the 'blacks' that London showers down from her smoky chimneys where bituminous coal is burned, mark my words, that woman is over thirty. She may be handsome, she may be clever, she may be lovable, in short, anything you please, but she is over thirty, and has reached maturity. I don't blame those who attach themselves to such women; but a man as able as you ought not to take a winter apple for one of those sweet little pippins which smile from their branch and ask to be eaten. Love does n't go by registers, I know that; a man does n't love a woman because she

is of this or that age, because she is handsome or ugly, stupid or wise; he loves because he loves — ”

“Well, I love for very different reasons. She is Marquise d’Espard, born a Blamont-Chauvry, she is the fashion, she has spirit, she has feet as pretty as those of the Duchesse de Berry, she has something like a hundred thousand francs a year, and I may be able to marry her some day; at any rate, she will put me in a position where I can pay my debts.”

“I thought you were rich,” said Bianchon, interrupting him.

“Pooh! I have fifteen thousand francs a year — just what my stable costs me. I have been swindled, my dear fellow, in that affair of Monsieur de Nucingen, — I’ll tell you all about it some day. I have, however, married my sisters; that’s the greatest clear gain that I have made since the time when you and I were together at Madame Vauquer’s; and I’d rather see them well established than have a hundred thousand a year of my own. Now, what do you expect me to become? I am ambitious. What can Madame de Nucingen do for me in future? A year more and I shall be shelved like a married man. I have all the annoyances of married life and celibacy without the advantages of either. That’s the false position every man gets into when he is tied too long to the same apron-strings.”

“Do you really think you’ll better yourself here?” said Bianchon. “Your marquise, my dear fellow, doesn’t please me at all.”

“Those liberal opinions of yours affect your sight. If Madame d’Espard were a Madame Rabourdin — ”

“My dear friend, be she noble or bourgeoisie, she will always be without a soul, the most consummate type of selfishness. Believe me, physicians are accustomed to judge of men and women; the ablest of us can probe the soul while probing the body. In spite of that charming boudoir in which you and I have just passed the evening, in spite of the luxury of that house, it is more than probable that Madame la marquise is in debt.”

“What makes you think that?”

“I don’t say it is so, I merely suppose it. She talked of her soul as the late King Louis XVIII. used to talk of his heart. Now listen to me; that frail little fair woman with chestnut hair, who complains of weakness for the sake of being pitied, is really in the enjoyment of iron health, has the appetite of a wolf, the strength and treachery of a tiger. Never was gauze, silk, muslin more cleverly twisted round — a Lie. *Ecco!*”

“You frighten me, Bianchon. You must have learned a good deal of life since the old days at Madame Vauquer’s.”

“Yes, since then, my dear boy, I’ve seen dolls, puppets, and marionettes! I know something of the manners and morals of fine ladies. We doctors spend ourselves, our time and strength, to save their beauty from the slightest injury; we succeed, we keep their secret as if we were dead, and they send for our bills and squabble over them! Who saved them? oh, simply nature! Far from praising us professionally, they’ll say evil of us, fearing lest their friends should employ us. My dear Eugène, these very women whom

you think angels I have seen stripped of all the little graces with which they cover up their souls; I've seen them without the rags that conceal their imperfections, without manners, without corset, even, and I tell you they are not beautiful! We began, you and I, by seeing various pools and much filth under the surface of society when we were stranded on that rock at Vauquer's, but what we then saw was nothing, nothing! Since I have gone much among the upper classes I've met monsters dressed in satin, Michonneaus in white gloves, Poirrets glittering with crosses, great lords better at usury than old Gobseck himself. Often, when I have been called upon to lend a helping hand to virtue, I have found it, to the shame of manhood I say it, shivering in a garret, pursued by calumny, keeping body and soul together on a paltry stipend, and called a fool or crazy, an original or a brute. My dear Eugène, your marquise is a fashionable woman, and it is precisely those women whom I hold in horror. Do you want to know why? A woman of high mind, pure taste, gentle spirit, a heart well filled, and who leads a simple life, has not the smallest chance of becoming fashionable. Draw your own conclusions. A fashionable woman and a man in power are analogous, but with this difference: the qualities by which a man rises above his fellows make him the greater personage and are to his honor; whereas the qualities by which a woman attains to her empire of a day are vices; she perverts her nature to hide her real self; and to lead the life militant of fashion she needs a constitution of iron under a semblance of fragility. As a doctor I know that a good

stomach precludes a good heart. Your fashionable woman has no feelings; her fury for pleasure is caused by the desire to warm up her frigid nature; she wants emotions and enjoyments like an old man who hangs about the stairway of the Opera-house. Having more head than heart, she sacrifices true emotions and friends to her personal triumph, just as a general sends his most devoted lieutenants to win a battle. A fashionable woman is no longer a woman; she is neither mother, wife, nor mistress; her sex is in her brain, medically speaking. Your marquise has all the symptoms of her worldliness, — the beak of a bird of prey, a cold light eye and honeyed speech; she is as polished as a steel spring; she stirs everything except the heart."

"There is some truth in what you say, Bianchon."

"Some truth!" exclaimed Bianchon; "it is all true. Do you think I was n't conscious of the insulting politeness by which she made me feel the imaginary distance her nobility puts between us; or that I did n't feel a deep pity for her catlike fawning as I thought of its object? A year from now she would n't lift her finger to do me the smallest service, but to-night she has loaded me with gracious smiles, thinking that I can influence my uncle Popinot, on whom the success of her suit against her husband depends."

"My dear boy, would you rather she had taken no notice of you? I admit your philippic against fashionable women; but all that's beside the question. I should, under any circumstances, prefer a Marquise d'Espard to the most retiring, modest young creature on earth. Marry an angel, indeed! and go and bury

your happiness in the country! The wife of a public man ought to be a government machine, a mechanism of fine compliments woven of silk and gold; she is the first and most faithful instrument of an ambitious man; she's a friend who can compromise herself without danger, and whose actions he can always disavow. Suppose Mohammed in Paris in the nineteenth century! His wife would infallibly be a Rohan, a Duchesse de Chevreuse, refined and flattering as an ambassadress, wily as Figaro. Your loving woman leads to nothing; a fashionable woman leads everywhere; she is the diamond with which a man can cut out windows when he has not the golden key to open doors. To the burgher the burgher virtues; to the man of ambition the vices of ambitious men. Besides, my dear fellow, don't you know that the love of a Duchesse de Langeais or de Maufrigneuse or Lady Dudley means untold pleasure? If you only knew how the cold reserve of such women gives value to the slightest sign of their regard! — what joy to see the purple of a violet peeping beneath the snow! A smile flickering behind a fan contradicts the conventional reserve, and is worth all the artless demonstrations of your loving bourgeoisie. Moreover, a woman of the world, a Blamont-Chauvry, has virtues after her kind. Her virtues are power, fortune, splendor, and a certain contempt for all that is beneath her —”

“Thank you,” said Bianchon.

“Old Boniface!” replied Rastignac, laughing. “Come, don't be commonplace; follow the example of your friend Desplein; get yourself made a baron, a knight of the Order of Saint-Michel, become a peer of France, and marry your daughters to dukes.”

"I! may all the devils of hell —"

"La! la! have you no superiority except that of doctoring? I declare I pity you."

"I hate such people; I want a revolution to get rid of them."

"Then, my old lancet of a Robespierre, do you mean to say you won't go and see your uncle Popinot to-morrow?"

"I don't say anything of the kind," replied Bianchon; "when the matter concerns you I'd fetch water from hell —"

"Dear friend, you touch my heart. I've sworn that the marquis shall be proved a lunatic —"

"But," continued Horace, "I don't promise to succeed to the extent you wish with Jean-Jules Popinot; you don't know him. But I do promise to bring him to see your marquise the day after to-morrow; she may get the better of him if she can. I doubt it. All the kingdoms of the world, all the duchesses, all the knives of all the guillotines might be brought to bear, the king might offer him a peerage, the good God might promise him the freedom of paradise and the revenues of purgatory, and not one of all those powers could make him swerve one hair's-breadth in doing his duty. He is a judge as death is death."

By this time the two friends had reached the ministry of Foreign Affairs at the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines.

"There's your home," said Bianchon, laughing, as he nodded toward the building, "and here's my carriage," summoning a cab. "The future of both is foreshadowed."

"You 'll always be happy in the depths of your pond; whereas I shall keep struggling on the surface with winds and waves until forced to go under; and then I'll come and beg a place in your grotto, old fellow."

"Saturday, then," said Bianchon.

"Agreed," replied Eugène; "you promise to bring Popinot?"

"Yes, I will do all that my conscience allows me to do. Perhaps this petition hides some little *dramo-rama*, as we used to say in the good old struggling days."

"Poor Bianchon! he'll never be anything but a worthy man," thought Rastignac, as the cab rolled away.

"Rastignac has saddled me with the hardest of all negotiations," thought Bianchon, when he woke the next morning, and remembered his promise. "But I have never in my life asked my uncle for the slightest service at the Palais, though I've paid more than a thousand visits for him gratis. Well, anyhow, he won't trouble himself; he'll say yes or no, and there'll be the end of it."

After this little monologue, the celebrated doctor started at seven in the morning for the rue du Foularre, where lived Monsieur Jean-Jules Popinot, judge of one of the Lower Courts of the department of the Seine.

The rue du Foularre, a name which formerly signified rue du Paille, was the most important street in Paris in the thirteenth century. There were the Schools of the University where the voice of Abélard and that of Gerson echoed through the world of knowledge. It is

to-day the dirtiest street in the twelfth arrondissement, the poorest quarter of Paris, where two-thirds of the population lack wood in winter, and from which more waifs are cast at the doors of the Foundling Hospital, more patients are sent to the Hôtel-Dieu, more beggars fill the streets, more rag-pickers rake in the gutters, more miserable old men creep along on the sunny side of walls, more workmen out of work hang about the street-corners, more prisoners are taken to the police-courts than in any other quarter of Paris. About the middle of this street, which is always damp, for its gutter conveys to the Seine the blackened water of several dye-houses, stands an old building, restored, no doubt, in the days of François I., built of brick, supported by courses and copings of freestone. Its solidity is proclaimed by an external shape which is not unusual in certain very ancient houses in Paris. It has, if we may be allowed to say so, a sort of stomach, produced by the bulging of its first floor under the weight of the second and third floors, although itself supported by the strong stone wall of the ground-floor. At first sight it looks as if the mullions of the windows, although held by strong stone casings, were about to crack in two; but an observer will not fail to note that this old house has one characteristic in common with the Tour de Boulogne, — the old bricks and the worn old stones preserve, rigidly, their centre of gravity.

Like all houses built before the invention of carriages, the arch of the gateway is very low and resembles the entrance to a prison. If on a rainy day some pedestrian should take shelter beneath its low-vaulted

roof with projecting whitewashed beams, he could not fail to observe the picture presented by the interior regions of this dwelling. To the left is a tiny square garden, which allows of only four steps in all directions, — a garden of black earth, with trellises without vines, where, in default of vegetation, lie the shadows of two trees, heaps of papers, old linen, plaster and other rubbish fallen from the roof; a barren scrap of ground, indeed, where time has cast, on its surrounding walls, on the trunks of the trees and their branches, a powdery something that resembles soot. Two arcades are on the garden side; two others are opposite to the porte-cochère; and through them can be seen the wooden stairway which leads up to the apartments, the baluster of which is a marvel of iron-work; so fantastic were the prevailing shapes at the period when it was wrought. The worn-out stairs now tremble at every step.

The casings of the doors of each apartment are brown with dirt and grease and dust, and the doors themselves are double and covered with Utrecht velvet studded with tarnished nails arranged in lozenge form. These remains of splendor prove that in the days of Louis XIV. the house was inhabited by some councillor to the parliament, or rich ecclesiastic, or perhaps by the treasurer of a bureau of perquisites. Such vestiges of former splendor bring a smile to our lips by a naïve contrast of the present with the past. Monsieur Jean-Jules Popinot lived on the first floor of this house, where the usual obscurity of first floors in Parisian houses was increased by the narrowness of the street. This old dwelling was known throughout

the length and breadth of the twelfth arrondissement; a region for which Divine Providence had provided this magistrate as it provides a beneficent plant or herb to heal or alleviate every disease. Here follows a sketch of this personage, whom the brilliant Marquise d'Espard was now desirous of seducing.

II.

THE JUDGE ILL-JUDGED.

IN his capacity as magistrate, Monsieur Popinot was always clothed in black; a peculiarity which contributed to make him ridiculous in the eyes of persons who are in the habit of judging all things superficially. Men who seek to maintain their dignity by such clothing ought, undoubtedly, to subject themselves to minute and continual care of it; but this dear Monsieur Popinot was absolutely incapable of producing upon himself the puritanical neatness which the wearing of black demands. His trousers, always shabby, seemed of the stuff called *voile*, of which barristers' gowns are made; and long usage had produced such innumerable creases that in certain places white or red or shiny stripes appeared, revealing either sordid avarice or abject poverty. His coarse woollen socks grinned from the sides of his misshapen shoes. His linen had that rusty look caused by long lying-by in drawers and wardrobes, — proving that the late Madame Popinot was afflicted with the linen mania; true, no doubt, to Flemish customs, the family washing was probably done but twice a year. The coat and waistcoat of the excellent magistrate were in keeping with his trousers, shoes, stockings, and linen. He had the luck of his slovenliness; for whenever it

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came to pass that he bought a new coat he conformed it to the rest of his apparel by getting it spotted with inexplicable promptitude. The goodman waited for his cook to tell him of the shabbiness of his hat before he got another. His cravat was always awry, and never did he straighten his crumpled shirt-collar when his judge's hands had set it askew. He took no care of his grizzled hair, and seldom shaved more than twice a week. He never wore gloves, but rammed his hands habitually into his pockets, the openings to which, always dirty and nearly always torn, added one feature more to the general neglect of his person.

Whoso has frequented the Palais de justice in Paris, a place where all varieties of black garments may be observed, can readily picture to his mind's eye the appearance of Monsieur Popinot. The habit of being seated all day long affects the body to a great degree, just as the tedium of listening to interminable pleadings affects the physiognomy of magistrates. Shut up in ridiculously narrow rooms, without dignity of architecture, where the air is soon vitiated, the Parisian judge is forced to acquire a frowning visage, puckered by listening and saddened by ennui; his skin gets sickly and takes on a greenish or an earthy tint, according to the temperament of the individual. In fact, the most blooming young man would become, within a given time, a pale machine, a mechanism applying the Code to all sorts of cases with the phlegm of a clock's mainspring.

If, therefore, Nature had not endowed Monsieur Popinot with an agreeable exterior, the magistracy had certainly not embellished it. His bony frame

presented knotty joints. His big knees, his large feet, his large hands contrasted oddly with a sacerdotal face, vaguely resembling a calf's head, gentle to insipidity, poorly lighted by whitish green eyes, drained of its blood, divided in two by a long flat nose, surmounted by a forehead without intellectual protuberance, and flanked by a pair of enormous ears which flopped gracelessly.

One sole feature made this face acceptable to a physiognomist. The lips of the man's mouth expressed a kindness that was well-nigh divine. They were thick red lips with countless creases; they were mobile, they curved, and on them nature had imprinted the noblest sentiments. They were lips that spoke to the heart and revealed in this old man clearness of mind, the gift of second-sight, and an angelic spirit; therefore you would ill have judged him had you done so only by his retreating forehead, his eyes without warmth, and his pitiable appearance. His life corresponded to his countenance; it was worn by incessant toil, and it covered the virtues of a saint.

His great legal acquirements had made him so well known that when Napoleon reorganized the whole system of law in 1806 and 1811, Popinot was, on the advice of Cambacérès, among the first to be appointed judge of the Imperial court of Paris. Popinot was no intriguer. At each new crisis, each new demand for office, the ministry set Popinot aside in favor of more exacting claims; for the good man never set foot in the houses of the arch-chancellor or the chief-justice. He was gradually shoved aside on all lists for promotion by the more active and pushing men; until,

finally, he was made a substitute judge. Then a general outcry arose at the Palais: "Popinot a substitute judge!" The injustice of the act struck the whole legal world, barristers, solicitors, clerks, everybody, except Popinot himself, who made no complaint of it. The first clamor over, every one came to think that, on the whole, it was for the best in this best of all possible worlds, — which, certainly, must be the legal world.

Popinot continued to be a substitute judge until the day came when a distinguished Keeper of the Seals, during the Restoration, avenged the wrong done to the modest, silent man by the great officers of the Empire. After being a substitute judge for a dozen years, Monsieur Popinot was, no doubt, fated to die in the subordinate position of an examining judge in one of the Lower courts of the Seine.

To explain the obscure fate of one of the most superior men the bench has ever known, it is necessary to enter into certain considerations which will serve to explain his life and character, and will also reveal something of the running-gear of that great machine called the Law. Monsieur Popinot was rated by three successive presidents of the Seine courts in a category of *judgery*, the only word that expresses the idea we desire to convey. He did not obtain from any of them the reputation for capacity which his work had already deserved. Just as a painter is relegated into a certain category — that of landscape, portrait, historical, marine, or genre painting — by the public of artists, connoisseurs, and ninnies, who, out of envy or critical omnipotence or prejudice, barricade him in

his own intellect, so Popinot was given his limits, and was hemmed in to them.

Judges, barristers, and lawyers, generally, all those who pasture on judicial territory, recognize two elements to every cause: legality and equity. Equity derives from facts alone, legality is the application of principles to facts. A man may be right in equity, and wrong legally, without blame to the judge for his decision. Between the man's consciousness and his act, there is a mass of determining reasons unknown to the judge, but which, in fact, condemn or legitimize an act. A judge is not God: his duty is to adapt facts to principles; to judge them in infinite variety by the application of one test. If the judge had the power of reading consciences and discerning motives so as to render absolutely just judgments, he would be the greatest of men. France employs about six thousand judges; no generation has six thousand great men at her service.

Popinot, in the centre of Parisian civilization, was a very able cadi, who, by the constitution of his mind, and by dint of rubbing the letter of the law into the spirit of the facts, had come to see the great defect of arbitrary applications. Aided by his strong judicial second-sight, he pierced through the double layer of falsehood with which a legal advocate hides the real kernel of a case. A judge in the same sense that the great Desplein was a surgeon, he could penetrate a conscience as Desplein saw into a body. His life and his morals had led him to an exact appreciation of the most secret thoughts through his scrutiny of acts. He burrowed into a case as Cuvier burrowed

into the soil of the globe. Like that great thinker, he went from deduction to deduction before he drew conclusions, and reproduced the past of a conscience as Cuvier reconstructed an anoplotherium. Apropos of a decision, he would often wake up in the night, roused suddenly by some ray of truth which darted vividly into his mind. Struck with the deep injustice which frequently ends a legal struggle, in which so much is to the scoundrel's profit, and so little serves an honest man, he often gave a judgment in favor of equity rather than legality in cases where the question admitted of intuition. Consequently his colleagues regarded him as unpractical; besides, his reasons, stated at great length, prolonged their deliberations. When Popinot discovered their unwillingness to listen to him he took pains to give his opinion more briefly. He was said to be a bad judge of all affairs into which equity could enter, but as his genius of appreciation was very striking, his judgment lucid, his penetration deep, he was considered to possess a special aptitude for the laborious duties of an examining judge. Thus it was that he remained during the greater part of his judicial career in that capacity.

Although his qualifications made him eminently fitted for that arduous office, yet the kindness of his heart kept him ever on the rack; he was constantly held as in a vice between his conscience and his pity. The functions of an examining judge, though better paid than those of a civil judge, tempt no one, for they are too confining. Popinot, modest, virtuous, without ambition and indefatigable, never complained; he made the sacrifice of his own tastes, his own tender-

heartedness to the public good, and allowed himself to be kept down to the slavery of criminal law, where, indeed, he contrived to be both just and beneficent. Sometimes his usher would secretly give a prisoner the money to buy tobacco or get a warm garment for winter, as he led the man back from the judge's office to the *Souricière*, — the strong room at the Palais, where the prisoners waited until the judges were ready to examine them.

Popinot knew the secret of being an inflexible judge and a merciful man. Consequently, no one was able to obtain confessions as easily as he, without having recourse to the judicial wiles of an examining judge. He had, besides, the shrewdness of an observer. This man, almost silly in countenance, simple and absent-minded, was able to detect the wiliest schemes of the Crispins of the galleys; he could foil the most astute of wantons, and melt the heart of the veriest scoundrel. Circumstances that are quite uncommon had sharpened his natural perspicacity; but in order to state them, it is necessary to glance into his private life, for his character as a judge was exercised solely on the social and outward side of him; within was another man, grander, and little known.

Twelve years before this present history begins, in 1816, during the terrible famine which coincided fatally with the stay of the so-called Allies in France, Popinot was appointed president of a special committee instituted to distribute relief to the starving people of his quarter, at the very moment when he was planning to leave the *rue du Fouarre*, a place of residence as displeasing to himself as to his wife.

The great lawyer, the expert criminal judge, whose very superiority seemed to his colleagues weakness, had, for the last five years, observed the results of judicial action without studying their causes. But now, as he climbed to garrets and came face to face with poverty, as he studied the hard necessities which gradually brought the poor and suffering to wrong actions, and took the measure of their bitter griefs, he was seized with compassion. The upright judge became, henceforth, the Saint Vincent de Paul of those grown children, those suffering workmen.

His transformation did not at once attain to wisdom. Benevolence has its moments of rashly yielding to temptation like vice. Charity can empty the purse of a saint, as roulette absorbs the property of a gambler. Popinot went from one misfortune to another, bestowing alms on the right hand and on the left; then, after raising the rags which cover like a compress the fevered wound of that great public wretchedness, he became, at the end of a year, the providence of his quarter of the city. He was president, as we have said, of the committee of benevolence and the bureau of charity. Wherever gratuitous work was needed, there he toiled without pretension, like the "Man with the short cloak," who spent his life carrying soup to hungry families.

Popinot had the happiness, however, of acting in a higher sphere. He foresaw everything; he prevented crime; he provided work for those who were out of it; he placed the helpless where they were cared for; he distributed all succor with discernment; he made himself the adviser of the widow, the guardian of the fatherless, and the secret partner of many a little trade.

No one at the Palais or in Paris knew of this hidden life. There are virtues so dazzling that they are comfortable only in obscurity; those who practise them hasten to put their light under a bushel. As for the people whom he succored, they all, working by day and weary at night, made no talk of his kindness; ungrateful as children, who can never pay their debt of gratitude because they owe so much. There is such a thing as forced ingratitude. But what true heart ever sowed beneficence for the purpose of reaping gratitude, and of thinking its own deeds great?

After the second year of this secret apostleship, Popinot converted the ground-floor of his house into one large receiving-room, which was lighted by three windows with iron bars, opening on the street. The walls and ceiling of this large room were white-washed, and the furniture consisted of wooden benches like those in schools, a common closet, a walnut desk and an arm-chair. In the closet were the registers in which he kept the record of his cases, the blanks for his "bread tickets," and his day-book. He kept his books in a business manner, that he might not be the dupe of his own heart. All the poverty of the quarter was carefully registered, each case having its own account, like that of a customer on the books of a merchant. When he felt in doubt about a family, or an individual who applied for help, he had recourse to the police of the district. His servant, Lavienne, a man made for such a master, was his aide-de-camp. Lavienne released or renewed all articles in pawn; he visited the most poverty-stricken places and families while Popinot was busy at the Palais.

From four to seven o'clock in the morning in summer, and from six to nine in winter, the huge room on the ground-floor was crowded with women, children, and indigent persons, to whom Popinot gave audience. There was no need of a stove in winter, for the swarm of bodies created a stifling atmosphere. Lavienne, however, took the precaution to cover the damp floor with straw. By dint of constant usage the benches were as polished as varnished mahogany, and the walls, to a man's height, had received a coating of some unspeakable tint from the rags and dilapidated garments of these poor people. The unfortunate creatures were so attached to Popinot that when in the early morning they clustered about the door before it opened (the women trying to keep warm with their hands under their rags, the men by beating their arms), not a voice was raised above a whisper lest it might trouble his sleep.

The rag-pickers, that race of nocturnal beings, knew the house well, and often looked up to see the judge's window lighted at untimely hours. Thieves passing along the street would say to each other, "That's his house," and they respected it. The judge's day was divided as follows: the mornings belonged to the poor; the middle of the day to criminals; the evenings to judicial toil.

The genius of observation which characterized Popinot was therefore twofold in its application; he divined the virtues of poverty, — good feelings crushed, noble actions in embryo, self-devotions invisible, — just as he saw in the depths of consciences the faintest outlines of crime, the finest threads of delinquency.

Popinot's patrimony amounted to three thousand francs a year. His wife, sister to Horace Bianchon's father, a doctor at Sancerre, had brought him about twice as much. She had now been dead five years and had left all her property to her husband. As the salary of a substitute judge was not considerable, and Popinot had only become an examining judge within the last four years, it is easy to guess the cause of his parsimony in clothes and in all that concerned himself and own life, when we reflect on the smallness of his income and the greatness of his beneficence. Besides, taking another view of it, indifference in the matter of clothes is a distinctive mark of the higher knowledge, of art madly worshipped, of thought perpetually active. To complete this portrait it suffices to add that Popinot was one of the few judges of the courts of the Seine on whom the Legion of honor was not bestowed.

Such was the man whom the chief-justice of the Second Court, to which Popinot belonged, had appointed to make an examination into the condition of the Marquis d'Espard on a petition presented by the wife for a commission in lunacy.

The rue du Foularre, where so many miserable creatures swarmed in the early mornings, became deserted after nine o'clock, resuming at that hour its usual gloomy and forlorn aspect. Bianchon therefore pressed his horse, wishing to come upon his uncle in the midst of his audience. He thought, not without a smile, of the singular contrast the judge would present to the salons of Madame d'Espard; and he resolved to persuade him into wearing clothes that should not seem absolutely ridiculous.

"I wonder if he has such a thing as a new coat," thought Bianchon, as he entered the rue du Fouarre, where the windows of the lower room were faintly lighted. "I think I had better consult Lavienne about it."

At the unwonted sound of wheels a dozen poor wretches came out on the steps, and pulled off their hats on seeing the doctor; for Bianchon, who treated his uncle's clients gratuitously, was almost as well known among them as the judge himself.

Bianchon now beheld his uncle in the middle of the room, the benches all around him swarming with paupers in the most grotesque singularities of costume; the sight of which would have filled the least artistic individual with delight and wonder. Certainly a Rembrandt, did any exist in our day, might have conceived from the sight of the silent misery artlessly posing there the noblest of compositions. Here the rugged face of a stern old man with a white beard and apostolic skull, presented a Saint Peter made to hand. His breast, partly uncovered, showed prominent muscles, indications of an iron constitution which had enabled him to bear so far an epic of sorrow. There a young woman suckling her last child to keep it from crying, was holding another, a boy about five years old, between her knees. Her breast, the whiteness of which was shining through her rags, the child with transparent skin, the brother whose attitude betrayed a future *gamin*, touched the soul of an onlooker by the sort of graceful contrast it offered to the long file of dreary faces reddened by the cold which surrounded this poor family. Farther

on, an old woman, pale and hard, presented that repulsive type of pauperism in revolt, ready to avenge itself in one day's riot for all its past misery. There, too, was the workman, young, debilitated, and out of work; whose intelligent eye showed faculties repressed by wants fought with hopelessly; silent about his sufferings, yet dying from lack of opportunity to break his way through the bars of that cage of misery where so many needs were swarming. Women were in the majority; the husbands, who had gone to their workshops, left their wives to plead the cause of their poor homes with that wit which characterizes the women of the people, who are nearly always queens in their hovel. On all those heads were seen torn foulards, on all those bodies mud-bedraggled skirts, frayed kerchiefs, dirty short-gowns, and eyes that shone like so many live flames. Horrible combination! the first sight of which inspired disgust, but presently caused a sort of terror, when it was seen that the humble resignation of these souls struggling against every want of life, was simply assumed as a means of speculation on benevolence. Two candles which lighted the vast room flickered in the sort of fog caused by the fetid atmosphere of this ill-ventilated place.

The judge was by no means the least picturesque person in this assemblage. On his head was a rusty cotton night-cap. As he wore no cravat, his neck, red with cold, and much wrinkled, rose sharply above the ragged collar of his old dressing-gown. His tired face bore the half-stupid expression of great preoccupation of mind. His mouth, in common with that of

most hard workers, was drawn together like a purse with its strings tied. His forehead, contracted by close attention, seemed to bear the weight of the confidences that were being made to him; he felt, analyzed, and judged them all. Attentive as a money-lender by "the little week," his eyes left the pages of his register to pierce to the inner being of the applicant, whom he examined with that rapidity of vision by which misers quiet their suspicions.

Standing behind his master, and ready to execute his orders, Lavienne was keeping order, receiving the new-comers and encouraging their timidity. When the doctor entered, a movement seemed to take place along the benches. Lavienne turned his head and was much surprised to see Bianchon.

"Ah! there you are, my boy," said Popinot, stretching out his hand. "What brings you here at this time of day?"

"I was afraid you might make a certain judicial visit about which I have come to talk, before I had a chance to see you."

"Well," resumed the judge, addressing himself to a stout little woman who was standing by, "if you don't tell me what the trouble is I can't guess it, my girl."

"Make haste," said Lavienne; "don't take other folks' time."

"Monsieur," said the woman at last, coloring high, and dropping her voice so that none but the judge and Lavienne should hear her. "I peddle fruit, and I owed for the board of my last baby, and so I was laying by my poor earnings —"

"Well, and your husband took them," said Popinot, divining the end of the confession.

"Yes, monsieur."

"What is your name?"

"La Pomponne."

"And your husband's?"

"Toupinet."

"Rue du Petit-Banquier?" continued Popinot, referring to the pages of his register. "He is in prison," he added, reading a remark written on the margin of a report of the case.

"For debt only, my dear monsieur."

Popinot nodded.

"But, monsieur, I haven't money enough to buy fruit for my barrow; and the landlord he came yesterday and forced me to pay him, or else he turned out into the street."

Lavienne stooped to his master and said a few words in his ear.

"Well, how much do you want to buy your fruit in the market?"

"Ah! my dear monsieur, I should want, to carry on my business, — yes, I should want, — at least ten francs."

The judge made a sign to Lavienne, who took the ten francs from a large bag and gave them to the woman, while the judge entered the loan upon one of his books. Seeing the thrill of joy that passed over the woman's whole body, Bianchon divined the anxiety with which the poor creature had doubtless come to the judge's house.

"Your turn," said Lavienne to the old man with the white beard.

Bianchon took the servant aside and asked how long these interviews were likely to last.

"Monsieur has seen a hundred persons already, and there are fifty more *to do*," said Lavienne. "Monsieur will have time to pay his first visits and return."

"My boy," said the judge, turning round and seizing Horace by the arms, "see; here are two addresses, not far from here, — one rue de Seine, the other rue de l'Arbalète. Just run round there, will you? Rue de Seine there's a young girl who has tried to smother herself; and you'll find, rue de l'Arbalète, a man who ought to go to your hospital. I'll wait breakfast for you."

Bianchon returned in about an hour. The rue du Fouarre was by that time deserted; day was dawning; his uncle was ready to go upstairs, for the last poor wretch whose misery he had lessened was just departing, and Lavienne's bag was empty.

"Well," said the judge, as they went upstairs, "how are they?"

"The man is dead," replied Bianchon; "the girl will pull through."

III.

THE PETITION.

EVER since the hand and eye of a wife had been lacking to the abode of Popinot, his apartments had assumed an appearance that was quite in keeping with that of their master. The sloveuliness of the man lost in commanding thought had placed its grotesque seal on all things. Everywhere inveterate dust; everywhere that distortion of the use of things which may be noticed to some extent in all bachelor establishments, — documents in flower-vases, empty ink-bottles everywhere, forgotten plates, tinder-boxes converted into candlesticks in the hurry of a search, partial repairs and alterations, begun and never finished, leaving an encumbering mass of things in one place and barrenness in others, occasioned by spasmodic and futile attempts at putting things in order.

But the judge's study, more particularly the scene of this incessant disorder, bore witness to his pauseless activity, to the hurry of a man overwhelmed with business, pursued by ever increasing demands upon him. The book-shelves looked pillaged; the volumes were flung upon it; some on their backs with the pages open, others face down; legal documents and papers heaped in piles against the lower shelves

encumbered the floor; and the floor itself had not been rubbed for years.

The tables and other furniture were covered with votive offerings made to the judge by grateful poverty. Bouquets of artificial flowers, and paintings in which Popinot's initials were wreathed with hearts and *immortelles* decorated the walls. On a pair of blue crystal horns which adorned the chimney-piece were two glass globes within which were divers mingled colors, giving them the appearance of some curious product of nature. Here were oddly turned boxes, pretentiously made, of no possible use. There, were paper-weights and pen-holders made in the style of such work done at the galleys by convicts. These triumphs of patience, this trumpery of gratitude, these paper bouquets, gave to the judge's study and bedroom something the aspect of a toy-shop. The worthy soul made *mementos* of these works of art; he stuffed them with memoranda, disused pens, and little papers.

These sublime testimonials to divine charity were very dusty and, mostly, dilapidated. A few birds, well-stuffed, but eaten by maggots, stood up amid the forest of odds and ends in which the dominant object was the favorite angora of the late Madame Popinot, restored to a semblance of life by some penniless naturalist, who probably repaid by this eternal treasure a slender alms. An artist of the quarter, whose heart misled his brush, had painted the portraits of Monsieur and Madame Popinot. Lower in the scale of art were charcoal landscapes, paper crosses cut out in open-work patterns with incredible labor, and even embroidered pin-cushions.

The window-curtains were blackened with smoke, and the color of the draperies could no longer be distinguished. Between the fireplace in the study and the long table where the judge worked, the cook had served two cups of coffee on a small round stand. Two mahogany arm-chairs covered with horse-hair awaited the uncle and nephew. As the light, intercepted by the windows, did not as yet fill the room, the cook had also provided two tallow candles, the immeasurably long wicks of which, forming what are called toadstools, cast that lurid light which makes a candle last the longer by reason of its slow combustion, — a discovery due to misers.

"My dear uncle, you really ought to dress more warmly when you go down into that hall."

"I don't like to keep them waiting, those poor things. Well, what do you want of me?"

"I came to ask you to dine to-morrow with the Marquise d'Espard."

"One of our relations?" asked the judge, with so innocently preoccupied an air that Bianchon burst out laughing.

"No, uncle; the Marquise d'Espard is a high and mighty dame who has presented a petition to your court, praying for a commission in lunacy on her husband, and you were appointed —"

"Do you expect me to go and dine with her? You are crazy!" said the judge, snatching up a copy of the statutes. "Here, read that article which forbids a judge from eating or drinking in the house of either party whose case he is to give judgment on. Let your marquise come and see me if she has any-

thing to say. Now I come to think of it, I'm to examine her husband after reading up the case to-night."

He rose, took a pile of documents from under a paper-weight, and said, after looking them over:—

"Here are the papers. As you take an interest in that high and mighty dame, let us read her petition."

Popinot crossed his dressing-gown over his breast, usually left bare by the flapping of that garment, and dipped a sop of bread into his cooling coffee, while he searched for the document in question, which he next proceeded to read, adding various parentheses and some discussions in which his nephew took part.

"To the Chief Justice of the Second Court of the department of the Seine, in session at the Palais de Justice.

"Madame Jeanne-Clémentine-Athenais de Blamont-Chauvry, wife of Monsieur Charles-Maurice-Marie-Andoche, Comte de Nègrepelisse, Marquis d'Espard' (Good nobility that), — 'the said dame d'Espard living on rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré, No. 104, and the said Sieur d'Espard, rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, No. 22' (Ah, yes! the chief-justice told me it was in my quarter), — 'having Maître Desroches for her lawyer —'

"Desroches!" exclaimed the judge; "a mere pettifogger, a man not at all well thought of by either the court or his brother-lawyers; a man whose reputation injures his clients."

"Poor fellow!" said Bianchon. "I know him; he

is unluckily without means, and he behaves like a devil in the holy-water basin, that 's all."

" " — has the honor to state that, for the last year, the moral and intellectual faculties of Monsieur d'Espard, her husband, have undergone so serious a change that they have now brought him to the state of dementia and imbecility provided for by article 486 of the Civil Code, and require, for the protection of his fortune and person, and for the interests of his children whom he keeps with him, the application of the restraints named in said article.

" " And, moreover, that the mental condition of Monsieur d'Espard, which for several years has given cause for serious anxiety as to his management of his business affairs, has lately fallen into a deplorable state of depression; that his will has felt the effects of this growing evil, and its weakness leaves Monsieur d'Espard exposed to all the dangers of incapacity, as shown by the following facts.

" " For some time past the revenues derived from Monsieur d'Espard's landed estates have been paid by him, without plausible reasons or advantages, even temporary, to an old woman of repulsive appearance, named Madame Jeanrenaud, living sometimes in Paris, rue de la Vrillière, No. 8, and sometimes at Villeparisis, near Claye, department of the Seine et Marne, for the benefit of her son, aged thirty-six years, an officer of the ex-Imperial Guard, whom Monsieur d'Espard, by exerting his influence, has placed in the Royal Guard as major of the first regiment of cuirassiers. These persons, reduced, in 1814, to the

greatest poverty, have, since then, acquired possession of various pieces of valuable property, among them, and lately, a house in the Grande rue Verte, which the Sieur Jeanrenaud has fitted up at considerable cost, and where he now lives with the Dame Jeanrenaud, his mother, in pursuance of a project of marriage, which project, if consummated, will involve an expense of over one hundred thousand francs. This marriage has been procured by the proceedings of the Marquis d'Espard toward his banker, the Sieur Mongenod, whose niece he asked in marriage for the said Sieur Jeanrenaud, promising his influence to raise the latter to the dignity of baron. In fact, this elevation has already taken place through an ordinance of his Majesty, bearing date December 29 ultimo, given at the solicitation of the Marquis d'Espard, as could be proved by his Excellency the Keeper of the Seals, if the court thinks proper to obtain his testimony.

“ ‘ And, moreover, that there exists no reason, even among those which morality and the laws reprove, which can explain the ascendancy which the said widow Jeanrenaud has acquired over the mind of the Marquis d'Espard, or the singular interest which he takes in the said Baron Jeanrenaud, with whom, however, he holds little communication. Nevertheless, the control exercised by these two persons is so great that whenever they are in need of money — ’ ”

“ Hey! hey! ‘ reasons which morality and the laws reprove!’ What does Desroches or his clerk mean to insinuate by that?” said Popinot.

Bianchon laughed.

“ ‘ — the said dame, or her son, ’ ” continued Popinot
“ ‘ can obtain from the Marquis d’Espard, without discussion, whatever they ask; and in default of ready money Monsieur d’Espard often gives them notes negotiated by the Sieur Mongenod, who stands ready to give testimony thereto.

“ ‘ And, moreover, in addition to these facts, it appears that recently, when certain leases on the d’Espard estates were renewed, the farmers paid large sums for the continuation of said leases, which sums the said Sieur Jeanrenaud obtained for his own benefit.

“ ‘ And also, that the will of the Marquis d’Espard has so little to do with the payment of these sums that when spoken to on the subject he appears to know nothing about them; and whenever responsible parties have questioned him on his devotion to these two individuals his answers have indicated such complete abnegation of his own ideals and interests that there would seem to exist some mysterious cause underlying this affair, on which the petitioner desires to call down the eye of the law; because it is impossible that this secret cause should be other than criminal, improper, and extortionate, or else of a nature requiring the intervention of the medical officers of the law on this obsession, which passes the bounds of ordinary insanity and can only be characterized by the unusual term of *possession* — ’ ”

“The devil!” cried Popinot; “what do you say to that, doctor? The statements here are very singular.”

"Possibly," replied Bianchon, "some effect of magnetic power."

"Do you believe in that nonsense of Mesmer's, — seeing through walls, and such stuff?"

"Yes, uncle," said the doctor, gravely. "As I listened to that petition the idea of such influence came into my mind. I declare to you that I have verified, in another sphere of action, facts analogous to these, which prove the unlimited control which one mind can obtain over another. I am, contrary to the opinion of my brother physicians, absolutely convinced of the power of the will, considered as a motor force. I have seen — setting aside all cases of collusion and charlatanism — the effects of this *possession*. Acts promised to the magnetizer by the magnetized person during sleep were scrupulously performed in the waking state. The will of one person can be made the will of another."

"In all kinds of acts?"

"Yes."

"Even criminal?"

"Even criminal."

"No one but you could make me listen to such talk."

"I'll let you witness the facts if you like," said Bianchon.

"Hum! hum!" muttered the judge. "Suppose that this pretended *possession* was really the cause of this affair, it would be difficult to produce and prove it in a court of law."

"I don't see any other means of seduction this Madame Jeanrenaud can have had, inasmuch as the

petition states that she is old and horribly ugly," said Bianchon.

"But," remarked the judge, "in 1814, the period at which this possession is stated to have been first observed, the woman must still have been young, and she may have been pretty, and so obtained by natural means, for herself as well as for her son, this empire over Monsieur d'Espard, which some men don't know how to evade. Such cause of 'possession,' as they call it, would be reprehensible in the eyes of the law, but it is explainable to the eyes of nature. Madame Jeanrenaud may have been angry at the Marquis d'Espard's marriage with Mademoiselle de Blamont-Chauvry, which probably took place about that time; and at the bottom of all this there may be nothing more than female rivalry."

"But, uncle, the woman is said to be repulsively ugly."

"The power of seduction," replied the judge, "is in direct proportion to repulsion — old question, that! Look at the small-pox, doctor. However, let's get on."

"Moreover, that since the year 1815, in order to obtain the sums demanded by these persons, the Marquis d'Espard has taken his two sons and gone to live in an apartment, rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève, the commonness of which is unworthy of his name and fortune' (A man can live as he chooses): 'that he there brings up his two children, Comte Clément d'Espard, and the Vicomte d'Espard, in habits of life not in keeping with their rank and their future; that often the lack of money is such

that recently the owner of the house, a *Sieur Mariast*, seized the furniture for non-payment of rent; and when this execution was effected in his presence the *Marquis d'Espard* assisted the sheriff, whom he treated like a gentleman, showing him the courtesy and attention he might have paid to a person who was above him in rank —'

The uncle and nephew looked at each other and laughed.

“ ‘ That, moreover, all the acts of the said *d'Espard's* life, besides those in relation to the widow *Jeanrenaud* and her son, the said *Baron Jeanrenaud*, are indicative of madness; that for the last ten years the said *d'Espard* has busied himself solely about China, its manners and customs and history; that he records and makes notes of Chinese habits; but, being questioned on these subjects, he confounds our present time and its events with the facts relative to China; that he censures the acts of our government and the conduct of the king (whom he used to love personally), comparing them with Chinese policy.

“ ‘ That, furthermore, this monomania has driven the *Marquis d'Espard* into actions so devoid of reason that, against the habits of his station and the ideas he professed on the duties of nobility, he has undertaken a commercial enterprise for which he signs notes and contracts which involve both his honor and his fortune, inasmuch as they put upon him the obligations of a merchant, and may, in case of non-payment, lead to bankruptcy; that the said notes and contracts,

given and made with paper-makers, printers, lithographers, and others, who have furnished means of publication for his work (entitled "A picturesque History of China," now appearing in parts) are of such magnitude that the said paper-makers and others have applied to your petitioner, requesting her to ask for a commission in lunacy on the Marquis d'Espard, in order to protect their interests — ' "

"The man must be mad!" cried Bianchon.

"You think so, do you?" said Popinot. "Wait till you hear his side. He who listens to one bell hears but one sound."

"It seems to me — " began Bianchon.

"It seems to me," said the judge, "that if one of my relations wanted to lay hold of the management of my property, and if, instead of being a simple judge whose colleagues can tell from day to day whether he is sane or not, I were a duke and peer, any lawyer, let alone so sly a fellow as Desroches, could make out a case against me as good as that."

" ' That the education of his children is greatly impeded by this monomania; and that he instructs them, contrary to all principles of education, on those points of Chinese history which are directly opposed to the doctrines of the Catholic Church; and, moreover, that he teaches them to read and speak the Chinese dialect — ' "

"Pooh!" exclaimed Bianchon, "Desroches is getting absurd."

“The petition is drawn up by his head-clerk, Godeschal, whom you ought to know,” said the judge.

“ ‘That he frequently leaves his said children without the common necessities; that your petitioner, in spite of her earnest entreaties, is not allowed to see them; that the *Sieur Marquis d’Espard* brings her said sons only once a year to visit her; that, knowing the privations to which they are subjected, she has attempted, but in vain, to convey to them some of the commonest necessities of life of which they are deprived — ’ ”

“Come, come, *Madame la marquise*, that’s nonsense. Whoso proves too much proves nothing. My dear boy,” said the judge, letting the petition drop upon his knees, “where’s the mother who ever lacked courage, wit, and bowels of compassion to the point of dropping below the instincts of the lower animals? A mother would manage to get to her children and help them, as a lioness would to her cubs. If your *marquise* sincerely wants to feed or clothe her sons the devil himself could n’t prevent it. That eel is too long for an old judge to swallow. Well, let’s read the rest of it.”

“ ‘That at the age which the said sons have now attained, it is essential that steps be taken to withdraw them from the fatal influence of such an education, that they be provided for according to their rank, and that the unhappy example of their father’s conduct be no longer before their eyes.

“ ‘That in support of the facts here stated, proofs exist which the court can readily obtain. The monomania of the said d’Espard as to China has led him to call the justice of peace of the twelfth arrondissement a third-class mandarin, and the professors of the school of Henri IV. “pig-tails.” Apropos of the simplest matters he declares that things are not done so in China; in the course of an ordinary conversation he will mix up the affairs of Madame Jeanrenaud with events that happened in the reign of Louis XIV., all the while imagining, apparently, that he lives in China. Several of his neighbors, more particularly the Sieurs Edme Becker, medical student, and Jean-Baptiste Frémot, professor, residing in the same house as the Marquis d’Espard, are of opinion that this monomania on the subject of China is the result of a plan formed by the Baron Jeanrenaud and the widow, his mother, to destroy the remaining mental faculties of the said d’Espard; for the only service they appear to render is to procure and convey to him documents and facts relating to the empire of China.

“ ‘And finally, your petitioner offers to prove to the honorable court that the sums absorbed by the Sieur and widow Jeanrenaud between the years 1814 and 1828 amount to not less than one million of francs.

“ ‘In support of the foregoing facts your petitioner offers the testimony of persons who are in the habit of seeing the Marquis d’Espard daily, and whose names, residences, and occupations are hereunto annexed; several of whom have urged the petitioner to make this application as the sole means of withdrawing her children from this fatal influence and of rescuing the remnants of their property.

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“ ‘ These considerations, together with the testimony hereunto annexed, proving, incontestably, the dementia and imbecility of the Marquis d’Espard herein named, described, and domiciled, your petitioner respectfully requests you to communicate to the king’s attorney-general; and your said petitioner further requests that you will appoint one of the judges of your court as commissioner to proceed to due inquiry into this case and to report on such day as you may be pleased to appoint, etc., etc.’ ”

“And here,” said Popinot, “is the order of the chief-justice appointing me. Well, what does your marquise want with me? I know all she has to say. I shall go to-morrow with my clerk and question the marquis; for the matter does n’t seem to me at all clear.”

“But look here, my dear uncle, I have never asked you the least little service connected with your judicial functions; well, now I do ask you to show to Madame d’Espard a kindness her situation seems to require. If she came here you would listen to her?”

“Certainly.”

“Well, go and listen to her in her own house. Madame d’Espard is a nervous, delicate woman, who would certainly be made ill by coming to this rat-hole of yours. Go there in the evening instead of dining with her, since the law forbids you to eat and drink with those who have cases in court.”

“Does n’t the law forbid you to receive legacies from your dead patients?” said Popinot, thinking he saw a tinge of sarcasm in his nephew’s remark.

“Come, uncle, if it is only to get at the truth of this affair, do as I ask you. You can go there as examining judge, to whom the matter, as stated in the petition, does not seem sufficiently clear. For my part, I should think it was quite as necessary to examine the marquise as her husband.”

“You are right,” said the judge; “she may be the crazy one, after all. I’ll go.”

“I’ll come and fetch you. Write it in your notebook: *To-morrow night, nine o’clock, Madame d’Espard.* Good,” said Bianchon, as he saw his uncle note it down.

IV.

THE MARQUISE D'ESPAUD.

THE next evening, at nine o'clock, Horace Bianchon mounted the dusty staircase of his uncle Popinot, whom he found toiling over the difficulties of a knotty case. The new coat which Lavienne had promised to procure from a tailor had not arrived; so that Popinot put on his shabby and spotted old garment and was the Popinot *incomptus* whose aspect was wont to excite a laugh on the lips of those to whom his life was unknown. Bianchon obtained permission, however, to tie his uncle's cravat and button up his coat, and in so doing he was able to conceal the worst spots by crossing the lappels from right to left, and so presenting a more respectable part of the cloth. Nevertheless, before long the judge had rucked up the coat, as usual, by his peculiar manner of ramming his hands into his pockets, so that being much wrinkled both before and behind, it formed a sort of hump in the middle of his back, producing, between the waistcoat and the trousers, a dissolution of continuity, — in other words, a gap through which his shirt appeared. Bianchon, to his sorrow, did not perceive this additional absurdity until the moment when his uncle was entering Madame d'Espaud's salon.

A slight sketch of the life of that lady is here necessary, in order to make the conference which Popinot was about to have with her intelligible to the reader.

Madame d'Espard had been for the last seven years one of the most fashionable women in Paris, where fashion lifts and drops, in turn, its votaries, who, now high, now low, that is to say, much considered and then forgotten, become, in the end, as obnoxious to fashion itself as a fallen minister or an exiled king. Her husband having left her about the year 1815, Madame d'Espard must have been married early in 1812. Her sons were fifteen and thirteen years of age, respectively. How came the mother of a family, thirty-three years of age, to be a leader of fashion? Though fashion is capricious, and no one can point in advance to its favorites, — for it often takes up the wife of a banker, or exalts some person of dubious beauty and elegance, — there would surely be something unnatural if it took no account whatever of age. In this instance fashion accepted Madame d'Espard as a young woman. She was thirty-three years old on the civil registers, and twenty-two in a salon.

But at the cost of what care, — what contrivances! Artificial curls concealed her temples. In her own apartments she doomed herself to live in a sort of twilight, pretending ill-health, in order to keep in the protecting shadow of curtains. Like Diane de Poitiers she used cold water for her bath; and, like Diane again, she slept on horse-hair, with morocco pillows to preserve her hair, ate little, drank water only, arranged all her plans and movements to avoid fatigue, and

performed even the smallest actions of her life with monastic regularity.

This stern system is carried, they say, even to the use of ice instead of water, and to the consumption of cold food exclusively, by an illustrious Polish woman, who, in our day, and at an age that is almost centenary, lives the life and follows the occupations of a reigning beauty. Destined, perhaps, to live as long as Marion Delorme, to whom biographers have given a hundred and thirty years, this vice-queen of Poland, at nearly one hundred, has a youthful heart and mind, a graceful figure, a charming waist. She can, in conversation, — where, by the by, her words sparkle like twigs in a blaze, — compare, of her own knowledge, the men and books of the present day with those of the eighteenth century. Living in Warsaw, she orders her bonnets from Herbault. A very great lady, she has all the energy of a little girl; she swims, she runs like a schoolboy, and she can throw herself on a sofa as gracefully as any young coquette; she scoffs at death, and laughs through life. Having amazed the Emperor Alexander, she is now amazing the Emperor Nicholas by the magnificence of her fêtes. She is still bringing tears to the eyes of the young men who love her; for she is of any age that she chooses to be, and the ineffable devotions of a grisette are as easy and natural to her as the grand air, the dignity of a great lady, for which she is so distinguished.

Did Madame d'Espard know Madame Zayonscek? Was she following her example? However that may be, it is certain that the marquise proved the benefit of the Polish system; her complexion was pure, her

forehead unwrinkled, and her body, like that of Diane, kept its supple freshness, a charm that holds the love a woman wins. The simple precautions of this régime, suggested by art, by nature, and possibly by experience, found in Madame d'Espard a temperament which aided them. The marquise was endowed by nature with a profound indifference for all that was not herself. Men amused her, but none of them had ever caused her those great emotions which deeply stir two natures and bend either one of them to the other. She had neither hatred nor love. If offended, she revenged herself coldly and tranquilly at her leisure, awaiting the occasion to gratify the ill-feeling she kept toward those who had once opposed her. She never moved a finger herself in her revenge; she spoke, knowing well that any woman with two words can kill three men.

She had seen Monsieur d'Espard leave her with keen satisfaction; for he took away two children who were beginning to annoy her, and might, in a year or two, destroy her pretensions to youth. Her most intimate friends and her least persevering adorers, seeing her without those matron jewels whose irrepressible growth betrays a mother's age, supposed her to be really a young woman. The two sons, about whom the marquise had seemed so solicitous in her petition, were, as well as their father, as much unknown to the world of fashion as the North Pole still remains to adventurous mariners. Monsieur d'Espard was supposed to be an eccentric person who had deserted his wife without having the smallest ground of complaint against her.

Mistress of herself at twenty-two years of age, and mistress of her fortune, which amounted to twenty-six thousand francs a year, the marquise hesitated long before she decided on a course which would determine her future life. Though she profited by the money her husband had spent upon the house, and kept the furniture and the horses and equipages, in short, all the luxury of a well-appointed house, she led a retired life at first, during the years 1816-17-18, — a period when families were recovering from the cruel disasters of the political turmoil. Belonging, moreover, to one of the most illustrious families of the faubourg Saint-Germain, her relations urged her to live quietly after the separation which her husband's inexplicable caprice had forced upon her.

In 1820, however, the marquise issued from this dormant state; she appeared at court, went to fêtes, and received in her own house. From 1821 to 1827 she kept her household on a brilliant footing; was remarked upon for her taste in all things, more particularly in her dress. She took a day, and had her hours for reception; and presently she was able to seat herself on the throne where the Vicomtesse de Beauséant had formerly shone, also the Duchesse de Langeais, and Madame Firmiani, who, on her marriage with Monsieur Octave de Camps had resigned the sceptre into the hands of the Duchesse de Maufriigneuse, from whom Madame d'Espard snatched it. The world knew nothing more about the life of the Marquise d'Espard than these general facts. She appeared likely to live long on the Parisian horizon, like a sun which seems nearly down, and yet does not set.

The marquise, during these years, became intimately connected with a duchess not less celebrated for her beauty than for her devotion to the person of a prince then in disgrace, but accustomed to take a leading part in past governments, as he was destined to do in future ones. Madame d'Espard was also the friend of a foreigner, a woman with whom a shrewd and illustrious Russian diplomatist was in the habit of discussing and analyzing public events; and, lastly, an old countess, accustomed to juggling with the cards of the great game of politics, adopted her almost maternally. To long-sighted men Madame d'Espard was seen to be thus preparing for a silent but real power which she intended should succeed the frivolous social sovereignty fashion had bestowed upon her. Her salon was beginning to take a political tone. The remark, "What do they say of it at Madame d'Espard's?" "Is Madame d'Espard's salon opposed to the measure?" began to be repeated by a sufficient number of simpletons to give the flock of faithfuls who attended it the authority of a coterie. A few political victims, soothed and petted by the marquise, — such, for instance, as the favorite of Louis XVIII., who was no longer of importance elsewhere, and several former ministers likely to come again into power, — declared that she was as clever in diplomacy as the noted wife of the Russian ambassador in London. The marquise had several times given either to deputies or peers certain sayings and ideas which subsequently echoed through Europe from the tribune. She had often correctly judged events on which the frequenters of her salon dared not venture an opinion.

The principal personages at court came to play whist at her house in the evenings. She had, it must be said, the good qualities of her defects. She was thought to be discreet, and really was so. Her friendships seemed able to stand all tests. She served her *protégés* with a constancy which proved that she thought less of making followers than of sustaining her own credit. This conduct was inspired by her dominant passion, vanity. The conquests and pleasures to which most women cling were to her the mere means to an end; she wanted to live at all the points of the widest circle that life could describe.

Among the men, still sufficiently young to make the future theirs, who filled her salons on the days she received, might be seen Messieurs de Marsay, de Ronquerolles, de Montriveau, de la Roche-Hugon, de Sérizy, Ferraud, Maxime de Trailles, de Listomère, the brothers Vandenesse, du Châletet, and others. She often admitted men whose wives she would not receive; and her social power was strong enough to impose these hard conditions on certain ambitious persons such as the two bankers, de Nucingen and Ferdinand du Tillet. But she had so long and so carefully studied the strength and weakness of Parisian social life that she conducted herself systematically in a manner that gave to no man the slightest advantage over her. A note or a letter by which she could be compromised was a thing impossible to obtain.

If the coldness of her heart allowed her to play this measured part with pre-eminent success, her external appearance served her equally well. Her figure was youthful; her voice was as she chose to make it, —

sweet and supple, hard and clear. She possessed to an eminent degree the secret of that aristocratic bearing by which a woman over-rides or effaces the past. The marquise knew the art of putting an immense space between herself and the man who fancied from some chance intimacy on her part that he had rights to a certain familiarity. Her imposing glance denied the past. In conversation, lofty and beautiful sentiments, noble conclusions seemed to flow naturally from a heart and soul so pure; but she was, in reality, a mass of calculations, quite capable of blasting a man who was awkward enough to interfere with her plans, if they touched her personal interests.

In attempting to attach himself to this woman, Rastignac had rightly judged her a most able instrument; but he had not yet used that instrument; far from being able to handle it, he found himself already being ground by it. This young *condottiere* of intellect, condemned, like Napoleon, to wage incessant war, knowing well that one defeat was the tomb of his future, had already discovered in his new protectress a dangerous adversary. For the first time in his turbulent life he was playing a game with a partner worthy of him. In the conquest of Madame d'Espard he saw looming before him a ministry; so he unwisely began by serving her before he made use of her, — a dangerous beginning!

The hôtel d'Espard required a host of servants, for the style of living of the marquise was almost magnificent. The great reception-rooms were on the ground-floor, but she herself lived on the first floor. The splendor of the grand staircase, the apartments deco-

rated in a style that recalled the former Versailles were so many signs of a vast fortune. When the judge saw the *porte-cochère* open to his nephew's cabriolet, he examined with a rapid glance the porter's lodge, the porter himself, the court-yard, the stables, the arrangement of the dwelling, the flowers that decked the staircase, the exquisite cleanliness of the stairs themselves, the walls, the carpets; and he counted the footmen in livery who came out upon the landing when the bell rang. His eyes, which, in the morning, in his grimy room, had fathomed the grandeur of humble poverty beneath the muddy garments of the populace, now studied with the same lucid vision the furniture and decorations of the rooms through which he passed to discover the poverty of grandeur.

"Monsieur Popinot — Monsieur Bianchon."

The two names were announced at the door of the boudoir where the marquise was seated, — a pretty room, recently re-furnished, and looking out on the garden. At this moment Madame d'Espard occupied one of those *rococo* arm-chairs which MADAME had brought into fashion. Rastignac, on her left, sat on a low chair which he appeared to have appropriated, like the *cavaliere* of an Italian lady. Standing at the corner of the fireplace, was a third personage.

As the sapient doctor had said, Madame d'Espard's temperament was harsh and nervous; had it not been for the regimen to which she subjected herself, her skin would have had the blotched and reddened appearance produced by constant over-excitement. As it was, she added to the effect of her superinduced whiteness by the vigorous tones and the judicious light and

shade by which she surrounded herself or with which she arrayed her person. Red-browns, maroon with gold reflections became her marvellously. Her boudoir, copied from that of a celebrated Englishwoman then the vogue in London, was draped in tan-colored velvet, to which she had added various decorations of exquisite design which lessened the pompous dignity of that regal color. Her hair was dressed like that of a young girl, smooth upon the forehead and falling thence in curls, which increased the rather long oval of her face; but just as round shapes are common, and often ignoble, so the oblong form is dignified and even majestic. A double mirror with facets will give evident proof of this rule when employed to reflect the face.

On perceiving Popinot, who stopped on the threshold like a timid animal, and stretched out his neck, one hand being thrust, as usual, into a pocket, the other holding a hat with a greasy brim, the marquise cast a glance at Rastignac in which was a gleam of satire. The rather silly expression of the good man's face agreed so well with his grotesque attire and his frightened air, that Rastignac, catching sight, at the moment, of Bianchon's annoyed face, could not help laughing as he turned away his head. The marquise gently inclined her head and made an apparently painful effort to rise from her chair, into which she fell back gracefully, as if to excuse her impoliteness by extreme debility.

At that moment the personage standing with his back to the fireplace brought forward two chairs and offered them with a slight bow to the judge and the

doctor; then, as soon as they were seated, he resumed his former attitude and crossed his arms. A word on that man.

We have a painter in these days, Decamps, who possesses, in the highest degree, the art of interesting the mind in some object he presents to the eye, whether it be a stone or a human being. In this respect, his drawing is more effective than his coloring. For instance, he draws an unfurnished room and puts a broom resting against the wall of it; if he chooses he can make you shudder at the sight of that broom; you fancy it has just been the assistant of some crime; it has dabbled in blood; it may have been the broom which the widow Bancal used to sweep out the room where Fualdès was murdered. Yes, the painter invests that broom with the fury of anger; its bristles are standing up like the terrified hairs of your head; he makes it the interpreter between the silent poesy of his own imagination and that which develops in your own. Having roused and alarmed your mind by the sight of that broom, to-morrow he will draw another, beside which lies a cat, asleep, but most suggestive in its sleep; you see at once that that is the broom the wife of the German shoemaker béstrides when she goes to the Brocken; but the next day that broom is a pacific implement on which is hung the coat of a clerk in a public office. Decamps has in his pencil what Paganini has in his bow, — a magnetically communicative power.

Well, it is necessary to convey to the art of words this form of genius, this chic of the pencil, to picture that tall, thin, erect man, dressed in black, with long

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black hair, who leaned against that fireplace without uttering a word. His profile was like the blade of a knife, cold and sharp, and the skin was the color of Seine water when stirred and muddied. He gazed on the ground, all the while listening and judging. His attitude had something alarming in it. He was there like Decamps' celebrated broom, in which lay the power to present an idea of crime. Sometimes, during the conference that ensued, the marquise endeavored to obtain some tacit advice by turning her eyes for an instant upon that personage; but however eager her mute interrogation might be, he continued as cold and rigid as the Statue of the Commander.

V.

WHAT WAS SAID BETWEEN A WOMAN OF THE WORLD
AND JUDGE POPINOT.

THE worthy Popinot, sitting on the edge of his chair, facing the fire, his hat between his legs, gazed at the gilded candelabra, the clock, the curiosities collected on the mantel-shelf, the velvet hangings, and all the other charming and costly things with which a woman of fashion surrounds herself. He was drawn from this bourgeois contemplation by the flute-like voice of Madame d'Espard saying to him:—

“Monsieur, I owe you ten thousand thanks —”

“Ten thousand!” thought the worthy man; “that’s too many; there is n’t one.”

“— for the trouble you have deigned —”

“Deigned!” thought he; “she is fooling me.”

“— to take in coming to see a poor petitioner too feeble to go to you —”

Here the judge cut short the marquise’s speech, giving her an inquisitorial look which settled to his mind the sanitary condition of the poor petitioner. “She is perfectly well,” thought he.

“Madame,” he said, with a respectful air, “you owe me nothing. Though my action in coming here is not according to our usual customs, a judge ought to spare no pains in discovering the actual truth of such affairs. Our verdicts can then be given less in the

mere spirit of the law than according to the inspiration of our own perceptions. Whether I inquire into the truth in my own study or here is of no consequence, provided I can get at that truth."

While Popinot was speaking, Rastignac pressed Bianchon's hand, and the marquise made the doctor a gracious little sign with her head, full of gratitude.

"Who is that gentleman?" said Bianchon, in a whisper to Rastignac, signing to the man in black.

"The Chevalier d'Espard; brother of the marquise."

"Your nephew tells me," said the marquise to Popinot, "how very busy you are; I knew already that you did good in secret, and hid your benefactions in order to relieve those you benefit from the burden of gratitude. Your labors in court must weary you exceedingly. Why do they not double the number of judges?"

"Ah! madame, that's not the trouble," said Popinot; "things would go worse if they did. Your idea is n't a bad one; but when that comes about, hens will have teeth."

At this speech, which agreed so well with the general expression of the judge's countenance, the Chevalier d'Espard looked him over with a single glance, that seemed to say: "Easy enough to get the better of you."

The marquise looked at Rastignac, who stooped over and whispered in her ear.

"Such are the men appointed to decide the interests, and often the lives of their fellows!"

Like most men who have grown old in their profession, Popinot let himself slide into the habits there

contracted, habits of thought especially. His style of address was that of an examining judge. He liked to question those with whom he spoke, getting them into unexpected dilemmas, and making them say more than they intended. Pozzo di Borgo amused himself, it is said, by detecting, in that way, the secrets of diplomats; long practice developed in him a mind that was steeped in craft.

As soon as Popinot had, as it were, surveyed the ground on which he stood, he thought it necessary to have recourse to the shrewdest, best concealed, and most circuitous ways known to the Palais of getting at the truth. Bianchon was cold and stiff, like a man who has made up his mind to endure pain and say nothing about it; inwardly, he was wishing that his uncle might step on that woman and crush her as we tread on a snake, — a comparison which may have been suggested to his mind by the long trailing gown, the serpentine position, the stretching neck, the little head, and the undulating movements of the Marquise d'Espard.

"Well, monsieur," said the latter, "however much I dislike to urge my claims, I have suffered too long not to hope that you will bring this matter to a speedy conclusion. When may I expect the verdict in my favor?"

"Madame, I will do all that depends on me," replied Popinot, in a kindly manner. "Are you ignorant of the reasons which led to the separation now existing between yourself and the Marquis d'Espard?" he asked, looking directly at her.

"Yes, monsieur," she replied, with the manner of

one who relates a prepared tale. "At the beginning of the year 1816 Monsieur d'Espard, who for three months past had changed very much in temper, proposed to me to go and live on one of his estates near Briançon, without considering my health, which that climate would have impaired, or my tastes and habits. I refused to accompany him. My refusal led him to reproach me so unjustly and for such ill-founded reasons, that, for the first time, I began to doubt the soundness of his mind. The following day he abandoned me, leaving me his house and the free disposal of my own income, and went to live in the rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève, taking my two children with him —"

"Permit me, madame," said the judge, interrupting her; "how much is that income?"

"Twenty-six thousand francs," she replied, in a parenthesis. "I immediately consulted old Monsieur Bordin as to what I ought to do," she continued; "but it appeared that the difficulties in the way of removing a father from the guardianship of his children are such that I was forced to resign myself to a solitary life at the age of twenty-two,—an age at which many a young woman would have committed follies. You have, no doubt, read my petition, monsieur; you know the principal facts on which I base my request for Monsieur d'Espard's sequestration?"

"Have you taken many steps toward your husband, madame, with a view to obtain your children?" asked the judge.

"Yes, monsieur; but they have all been useless. It is very cruel for a mother to be deprived of the

affection of her children; above all, when they are capable of giving her the happiness all women crave."

"The eldest must be sixteen," said the judge.

"Fifteen!" interposed the marquise, eagerly.

Here Bianchon looked at Rastignac. Madame d'Espard bit her lips.

"What can the ages of my children signify to you?" she said.

"Ah, madame," replied the judge, appearing not to notice the hearing of his words, "a lad of fifteen and his brother (about thirteen, I suppose) have legs and minds; they might have come to see you; if they don't come it must be to obey their father, and the fact of their obeying him in such a matter shows that they love him."

"I don't understand you," said the marquise.

"You are perhaps ignorant that your lawyer makes you say in your petition that your children are extremely unhappy with their father."

Madame d'Espard replied with artless innocence:—

"I don't know what my lawyer made me say."

"Pardon me these deductions, but law and justice must weigh all facts," said Popinot. "The questions I put to you, madame, are inspired by the desire of thoroughly understanding this affair. According to you, Monsieur d'Espard abandoned you on a most frivolous pretext. But instead of going to Briançon, where he wished to take you, he stayed in Paris! There is a point that is not at all clear. Did he know this Madame Jeanrenaud before his marriage?"

"No, monsieur," replied the marquise, with a displeasure that was visible only to Rastignac and the Chevalier d'Espard.

She felt annoyed at being put in the dock by this judge whose judgment she desired to pervert; but, as Popinot's preoccupation of mind made his manner as vacant as ever, she ended by attributing these questions to the inquisitive genius of Voltaire's *bailli*.

"My relatives," she said, continuing her recital, "married me, at the age of sixteen, to Monsieur d'Espard, whose name, fortune, and habits corresponded to those which my family required in my husband. Monsieur d'Espard was then twenty-six years old; he was a gentleman in the English acceptance of the word; his manners pleased me; he seemed to have much ambition — and I like ambitious men," she added, with a glance at Rastignac. "If Monsieur d'Espard had not encountered this Madame Jeanrenaud, his fine qualities, his acquirements, and his knowledge would have carried him, according to the opinion of his friends, into the government. The king, Charles X., then MONSIEUR, held him in high esteem, and the peerage, a place at court, and a high place, would undoubtedly have been his. That woman turned his head and destroyed the future of a whole family."

"What were Monsieur d'Espard's religious opinions?"

"He was," she said, "and he still is a man of professed piety."

"Do you think that this Madame Jeanrenaud exercises some mystical power over him?"

"No, monsieur."

"You have a fine house, madame," said Popinot, abruptly, taking his hands from his pockets and

rising to draw aside the tails of his coat and warm himself. "This boudoir is very comfortable, these chairs are magnificent; your apartments are, indeed, sumptuous! You must suffer much while living in such luxury to feel, as you say, that your children are ill-lodged, ill-fed, ill-clothed. I cannot imagine anything more distressing for a mother."

"Yes, you are right, monsieur. I would give anything if I could only procure some happiness for those poor boys, whose father makes them toil, I am told, from morning till night, on this deplorable work about China."

"You give fine balls which would amuse them. But then," added the judge, reflectively, "they might get a taste for dissipation. I suppose their father does bring them, or send them to you, sometimes?"

"Twice a year, monsieur; on New Year's day and on my birthday. On those days Monsieur d'Espard does me the favor to dine with me."

"Very singular conduct," said Popinot, with a convinced air. "Have you ever seen this Madame Jeanrenaud?"

"Once; my brother-in-law, who, in his brother's interests —"

"Ah!" interrupted Popinot; "then monsieur is the brother of Monsieur d'Espard?"

The chevalier bowed without speaking.

"The Chevalier d'Espard, who is conversant with the whole affair, took me to the Oratory where this woman goes, for she is a Protestant. I saw her; there is nothing attractive about her; she looks like a butcher's wife; extremely fat and horribly pitted with

the small-pox; she has the feet and hands of a man, and squints! — in short, she is hideous.”

“It is inconceivable!” exclaimed the judge, looking the greatest fool of all the judges in the kingdom. “And that creature lives not far from here in a fine mansion! Well, well! there’s no such thing as a bourgeois in these days.”

“Yes, a mansion on which she and her son have lavished money.”

“Madame,” said the judge, “I live in the faubourg Saint-Marceau, and I know very little about such expenses; what do you call lavishing money?”

“Why,” said the marquise, “keeping up a stable, five horses, three carriages, a *calèche*, a *coupé*, and a cabriolet.”

“And that costs a big sum?” inquired Popinot, apparently astonished.

“Enormous,” interposed Rastignac. “The keeping of such a stable, the care of the carriages and the liveries cost not less than fifteen to sixteen thousand francs a year.”

“Do you think so, madame?” asked Popinot, in a tone of doubt.

“Yes, at least that sum,” replied the marquise.

“And the furnishing of their mansion, — I suppose that cost a big sum, too?”

“More than a hundred thousand francs,” replied the marquise, smiling at the judge’s vulgarity.

“Judges, madame,” said Popinot, “are very unbelieving; in fact, they are paid to be so, and I am. But if these things are true the *Sieur Jeanrenaud* and his mother have swindled *Monsieur d’Espard* strangely.

Here's a stable which, you say, costs sixteen thousand francs a year. The table, servants' wages, and other household expenses must amount to at least three times as much, which brings the total up to over sixty thousand francs a year. Do you suppose that those persons, formerly, you say, so poor, could have acquired all that fortune? The interest on a million is only forty thousand francs."

"Monsieur, the son and his mother invested the sums given them by Monsieur d'Espard on the Grand-Livre when the Funds were at 60 to 80. I think their income must amount to over sixty thousand francs. Besides, the son has a good salary."

"If they spend sixty thousand francs a year," said the judge, "how much do you spend?"

"About the same," replied Madame d'Espard.

The chevalier made a movement, the marquise flushed, Bianchon glanced at Rastignac, but the judge looked so kindly a simpleton that the marquise felt reassured. The chevalier seemed to take no further interest in the conversation; he considered the game as lost.

"These Jeanrenauds, madame," said Popinot, "might be summoned before a police-court."

"I have always thought so," replied the marquise, delighted. "If threatened with exposure in court they would compromise."

"Madame," said Popinot, "when Monsieur d'Espard left you, did he give you a power of attorney to receive and manage your property?"

"I don't understand the object of these questions," said the marquise, sharply. "It seems to me that if

you take into consideration the state in which the insanity of my husband has placed me you ought to concern yourself with him and not with me."

"Madame," said the judge, "I am coming to that. But before confiding to you, or to others, the administration of your husband's property, it is proper that the court should know how you have managed your own property. If Monsieur d'Espard gave you a power of attorney, he placed confidence in you, and the court will appreciate that fact. Did you receive the power of attorney? Under it you would have been authorized to buy and sell stocks and bonds and re-invest the money."

"No, monsieur. The Blamont-Chauvrys are not accustomed to do business," she said, deeply insulted in her pride of nobility, and forgetting her immediate cue. "My property is intact; Monsieur d'Espard gave me no power of attorney."

The chevalier put his hand before his eyes that they might not betray the keen annoyance he felt at his sister-in-law's want of foresight; he saw she was destroying her own case. Popinot had marched straight to the fact, in spite of the apparent irrelevance of his questions.

"Madame," said the judge, indicating the chevalier, "monsieur is connected with you by ties of blood; but can I speak openly before these other gentlemen?"

"Yes," said the marquise, surprised by such caution.

"Well, madame, you admit that you spend sixty thousand francs a year, — and the sum seems to me well-spent, in view of your stables, your mansion, your

numerous servants, and the habits of a household which are, doubtless, superior to those of the Jean-renauds — ”

The marquise made a haughty sign of assent.

“Now,” continued the judge, “as you possess only twenty-six thousand francs a year, you must — between ourselves be it said — have debts to at least, if not more than, a hundred thousand francs. The court will therefore have the right to suppose that the motive which prompts you to apply for the removal of your husband from the management of his property is one of self-interest; in other words, the necessity of paying your debts, if — you — have — any. An earnest request for my interest has led me to examine your situation; I beg you now to examine it yourself and to be candid in admitting the facts. There is still time — if my suppositions are correct — to save yourself from the scandal of a blame which the court might attribute to you unless you make your position perfectly plain and clear. We are bound to examine into the motives of our petitioners, as well as to listen to the statements of the other side; we must make sure that the persons endeavoring to sequester another are not guided either by passion, or by a cupidity which is, unfortunately, becoming only too prevalent in the present day — ”

The marquise was broiling like Saint Laurence on his gridiron.

“And,” continued the judge, “I must have more light on this subject. Madame, I do not demand a strict accounting from you, but I must inquire how it is that you have been able to keep up an expenditure

of sixty thousand francs a year, and that for several years. Many women accomplish that phenomenon in their homes, I know, but you are not of their kind. Speak frankly; you may have had perfectly legitimate means of obtaining the money, — a royal grant, indemnities recently granted; though in that case your husband's permission would be necessary to enable you to receive them."

The marquise made no reply.

"Reflect," said Popinot, "that Monsieur d'Espard will, of course, defend himself, and his lawyers will have the right to search for your creditors. This boudoir is newly furnished; the rest of the house seems to have been redecorated since Monsieur le marquis left you in 1816. If, as you were good enough to tell me, the furnishing of a mansion for such people as the Jeanrenauds was costly, how much more costly must it be for you, who are a great lady. If I am mistaken you must set me right. Remember the duties that the law lays upon me; the rigorous inquiries that I am bound to make before proceeding to the extreme act of depriving the father of a family of his rights in the prime of life. You must therefore, Madame la marquise, excuse the difficulties I have the honor of submitting to you, and on which you can easily give me explanations. When a man is set aside on the ground of insanity, the law requires the appointment of a guardian. Who is to be the guardian?"

"His brother," replied the marquise.

The chevalier bowed. An awkward silence fell upon the five persons present. In his casual way the judge had laid bare the woman's secret sore. Popinot's

good-natured, silly face, at which the marquise, Rastignac, and the chevalier had felt inclined to laugh, now acquired in their eyes its actual character. The absurd individual was a clear-sighted judge. His vulgar interest in the cost of the boudoir explained itself. Starting from the gilded elephant which supported the clock, he had followed this luxury step by step, and had ended by reading to the bottom of the woman's soul.

"If the Marquis d'Espard is crazy on the subject of China," said Popinot, at last, pointing to the elephant, "I see that the products of that country are equally agreeable to you. But perhaps it is to him that you owe all these charming Chineseries," he added, looking round the room.

This little jest, which was full of good taste, made Bianchon smile, surprised Rastignac, and caused the marquise to bite her thin lips.

"Monsieur," said Madame d'Espard, "instead of being the protector of a woman placed under the cruel alternative of seeing her fortune lost and her children ruined, or of seeming to be the enemy of her husband, you accuse me, and suspect my motives! You must acknowledge that your conduct is very singular."

"Madame," said the judge, "the great care which the courts bestow upon cases of this kind might have given you, in another judge, a far less indulgent critic than I. Remember, also, that Monsieur d'Espard's lawyer will not spare you. You may be sure that he will condemn and vilify acts and intentions on your part which may be perfectly pure and disinterested. Your life will belong to him; and he will turn it inside

out, — not treating you with the respectful deference that I have shown.”

“For which I thank you,” said the marquise, ironically. “Admitting for a moment that I owe thirty — fifty thousand francs, what would that be to the d’Espards and the Blamont-Chauvrys? But suppose, as I say, it were so, would that prevent my husband from being confined if he is mad?”

“No, madame.”

“Though you have questioned me with a slyness I did not suppose a judge would be guilty of using in a matter where frankness sufficed to tell you all, and though,” she said, “I still regard myself as justified in making you no answer, I am willing to say, without subterfuge, that my position in society and all these efforts made to maintain it are not in accordance with my tastes. I began my life, after my husband left me, by living for years in solitude; but of late the interests of my children appeal to me, and I feel that I ought to take the place of their father. By receiving my friends, maintaining all social relations, — making debts, if you choose to say so, — I assist the future of my sons; I am preparing brilliant careers for them, in which they will find among my friends both aid and encouragement.”

“I appreciate your devotion, madame,” replied the judge. “It does you honor, and I should be the last to blame such conduct. But the magistrate belongs to all, and not to any one side; he must know everything and weigh everything.”

The natural tact of the marquise and her long habit of judging men made her aware that Monsieur Popinot

was not to be influenced by any personal considerations. She had counted on meeting an ambitious magistrate; she had met an upright conscience. Feeling the uselessness of her present tactics she began to think of other means of succeeding in her ends.

The servants brought in tea.

"Has madame any further explanations to give me?" said Popinot, rising, as he saw these preparations.

"Monsieur," she said, haughtily, "do your duty; examine Monsieur d'Espard and you will pity me, I am certain." She raised her head, and looked at Popinot with a pride that was mingled with impertinence. The good man bowed respectfully.

"He's a pretty fellow, your uncle!" said Rastignac aside to Bianchon. "Can't he comprehend anything? Does n't he know what the Marquise d'Espard is, and what her influence and her secret power in society are? She'll send for the Keeper of the Seals to-morrow, and your uncle will be made to feel it."

"My dear fellow, how can I help it?" said Bianchon. "Did n't I warn you how it would be? My uncle is not an accommodating man."

"No, he is a man to get rid of," replied Rastignac.

The doctor was forced to bow in haste to the marquise and her mute brother-in-law, and hurry after Popinot, who, not being one to linger in a disagreeable situation, was already at the door.

"That woman owes at least three hundred thousand francs," said the judge, as he got into his nephew's cabriolet.

"What do you think of the affair?"

"I?" said the judge. "I never have any opinion till I have examined the whole case. To-morrow, early, I shall summon that Madame Jeanrenaud to my office at four in the afternoon, and question her as to the facts which relate to herself and her son, for they both seem compromised in the matter."

"I'd like to know the secret of it."

"Good gracious! don't you see that the marquise is the tool of that tall stick of a man who never said a word. There's Cain in him, but a Cain who finds his club on the judge's bench, — where, however, unluckily for him, we have more than one sword of Damocles."

"Ah! Rastignac," cried Bianchon, "why did you ever set your foot in such a business?"

"We are accustomed to see plenty of such little plots in families," said the judge. "There's never a year that we don't render judgments of *non-lieu* on appeals for the confinement of lunatics. Morality seems to see nothing dishonorable in such attempts; whereas we send to the galleys some poor devil who breaks a pane of glass in a jeweller's window. The Code is not without its defects."

"But remember the facts stated in the petition."

"My dear boy, you don't know the romances which clients tell to their lawyers. Besides, if lawyers presented only the truth they wouldn't earn enough to pay the interest on the costs of their practice."

VI.

THE INSANE MAN.

THE next day, at four in the afternoon, a stout lady, who resembled a cask on which a gown and a belt had been fastened, toiled, panting and sweating, up the stairs of Judge Popinot. She had descended, with much difficulty, from a green landau which exactly corresponded to her; the landau could not be conceived of without the woman, nor the woman without the landau.

"It is I, my dear monsieur," she said, presenting herself at the door of the judge's office, — "Madame Jeanrenaud, whom you have sent for as though she were nothing more nor less than a thief." These rather vulgar words were said in a vulgar voice, wheezy with asthma, and were stopped by a fit of coughing. "When I go through damp places you have no idea what I suffer, monsieur. I shall never make old bones, saving your presence. But anyhow, here I am."

The judge was quite taken aback at the sight of this Maréchale d'Ancre. Madame Jeanrenaud had a skin that was pitted with innumerable holes all highly colored, a low forehead, a flat nose, a face as round as a cannon-ball; in fact, every part of the good woman was round. She had the lively eyes, the frank man-

*“In short, she was quite in keeping with her last
words, ‘Hère I am!’”*



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ner, the jovial talk of a countrywoman; her chestnut hair was pushed back under a bonnet-cap worn beneath a green bonnet adorned with bunches of auriculas, commonly called bear's ears. Her voluminous bosom was laughable, and excited some dread of grotesque explosion when she laughed. Her stout legs were of the kind that makes the gamin of Paris say of certain solid women that they are built on piles. The worthy widow wore a green gown trimmed with chinchilla. In short, she was quite in keeping with her last words, "Here I am!"

"Madame," said Popinot, "you are suspected of having employed seduction on Monsieur le Marquis d'Espard, in order to obtain from him considerable sums of money."

"Accused of *what?*" she cried; "seduction! But, my dear monsieur, you are a respectable man, and, besides, as a magistrate, you must have common-sense. Just look at me! Am I a woman to seduce any one? I can't even tie my shoes. It is twenty years since I've been able to lace my stays without the danger of sudden death. When I was eighteen I was slim as asparagus, and pretty, too, as I may say now. That was the time I married Jeanrenaud, a worthy man, skipper of a salt-boat. I had my son, who is a fine-looking fellow, and my glory; for though I tell it to my credit, he's my best piece of work. That boy has been a soldier of Napoleon, and one of the Imperial Guard. But, alas! my poor Jeanrenaud's death — for he died drowned — was a dreadful change for me. I took the small-pox and stayed in my room for months; and when I came out I was as fat as you see me now,

ugly as sin, and miserable as the stones of the street. There 's my seductions for you!"

"But, madame, what then can be the motives which lead Monsieur d'Espard to give you such large sums of money?"

"Immense; call them immense, monsieur, and I'll agree with you; but as for his motives, I am not authorized to tell them."

"You do wrong. His family, very justly alarmed, are expecting to confine him as a lunatic."

"Good God!" cried the good woman, jumping up with remarkable vivacity, "is it possible that they are tormenting him about me? — he! a king of men! a man who has n't his equal! Rather than any harm should happen to him, rather, I may say, than he should lose one hair from his head, we would give up all, all, monsieur. Write that down on your papers. Heavens and earth! I must go and tell my boy about this. Ha! who ever heard the like?"

With that she left the room, rolled to the staircase and disappeared.

"She does n't lie, that one," thought the judge. "At any rate, I shall know the truth to-morrow, for to-morrow I'll go and examine the Marquis d'Espard."

Persons who have passed the age when the human being spends his life heedlessly, at random, are aware of the influence exerted on serious matters by things apparently unimportant, and they will not be surprised at the gravity attaching to the following little circumstance. The next day Popinot had a coryza, a malady not dangerous, and known, commonly, under the foolish and incorrect name of "cold in the head."

Having no reason to suppose that a short delay would prove serious, the judge, who felt feverish, stayed in the house and did not go to examine the Marquis d'Espard. This one lost day was to this affair what the broth taken by Marie de Medici was on the famous day of Dupes, which, by delaying her conference with Louis XIII., enabled Richelieu to get first to Saint-Germain and recover his royal captive.

Before following the judge and his clerk to the residence of the Marquis d'Espard, it may be well to cast a glance on the house, the home, and the affairs of this father of a family, represented to be insane by his wife's petition.

We find here and there in the old quarters of Paris various buildings in which archæology perceives a certain desire to ornament the city, together with that passion for proprietorship which makes mankind endeavor to give permanence to its buildings. The house where Monsieur d'Espard was now living, in the rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève, was one of those ancient erections built of freestone; it was not without richness in its architecture, though time had blackened its stones, and the many revolutions of the city had changed its aspect both within and without. The great personages who formerly inhabited the quarter of the University having departed, together with the great ecclesiastical institutions, this old dwelling had since sheltered trades, industries, and a class of inhabitants for which it was never intended.

During the last century a printing-office had defaced its floors, soiled its panels, blackened its walls, and changed the divisions of its various rooms. Once

the mansion of a cardinal, the fine old house was now the dwelling of many obscure tenants. The style of its architecture proved that it was built during the reigns of Henri III., Henri IV., and Louis XIII., the period at which the hôtels Mignon, Serpente, the palace of the Princesse Palatine, and the Sorbonne were built in the same neighborhood.

Monsieur d'Espard occupied the ground-floor, no doubt for the sake of the garden, which might pass for spacious in such crowded quarters, and lay to the south, — two advantages which conduced to the health of his children. The situation of the house, in a street the name of which indicates a rapid descent of ground, gave to this ground-floor apartment enough height to prevent its being damp. Monsieur d'Espard had hired it — for a very moderate sum, rents in this quarter being low at the time he went there — in order to be near the schools, and to superintend, himself, the education of his sons. The state of the premises when he hired them was such that he was obliged to repair and fit up his apartment on the ground-floor, which he did in a manner that made it a suitable residence. He restored the woodwork to those brown tones beloved in Holland, and by the old Parisian bourgeoisie, which, in our day, afford such fine effects to painters of genre. The walls were hung with plain papers which harmonized well with the woodwork. The windows had curtains of some material that was not costly, and yet was chosen in a manner to produce an effect in keeping with the general harmony. The furniture was choice and well arranged.

Whoever entered those rooms could not fail to be conscious of a peaceful, tranquil feeling, inspired by the stillness and silence that reigned there, by the quietness and symphony of the coloring, — giving to that word “symphony” the meaning which artists attach to it. A certain nobility of detail, a perfect harmony between the persons and the things, brought, insensibly, to the lips the word *suave*. Few persons were admitted to these apartments occupied by the marquis and his sons, whose lives might, therefore, seem mysterious to the surrounding neighborhood.

On the third story of the same house were three large rooms, still in the state of dilapidation and grotesque bareness in which the former printing-office had left them. These rooms, devoted to the preparation of the “Picturesque History of China,” were so arranged as to contain an office, a ware-room, and a smaller office in which Monsieur d’Espard spent a portion of his day; for, after the mid-day breakfast until four in the afternoon, he was always at work on the third floor, engaged in superintending the preparation of the work he had undertaken. Persons who came to see him sought him there, and not in his own apartments; his sons, on their return from school, would frequently go up there. But the home on the ground-floor was the sanctuary where father and sons spent their days between the dinner hour and the next morning.

The family life was carefully guarded. Two servants sufficed for its wants: a cook, an old woman long attached to the d’Espard family; and a valet forty years old, who had served the marquis before his mar-

riage with Mademoiselle de Blamont. The children's governess had also remained with them, and the order and neatness of the establishment was a visible proof of the maternal affection she put into the management of the household and the care of the children. Grave, and not communicative, these three good people seemed to have entered into the hidden thought which guided the life of their master. The contrast of their reserved habits and the ways of other cooks and valets contributed, perhaps, to the air of mystery which was thought to surround this home, and did, in fact, give rise to calumnies for which, it must be owned, Monsieur d'Espard himself gave some occasion.

Proper and praiseworthy motives had made him resolve to have no communication with the other tenants of the old house. In undertaking the education of his sons he was anxious to keep them from intercourse with strangers. Perhaps, also, he wished to avoid the annoyances of too close neighborhood. In a man of his station, at a time when liberalism was becoming rampant in the Latin quarter, such conduct not unnaturally excited against him those petty passions and jealousies the silliness of which, equalled only by their meanness, finds vent in porters' gossip and malicious talk from door to door; about which Monsieur d'Espard and his servants were wholly ignorant. The valet was called a Jesuit, the cook a sly dissembler, and the governess was said to be in league with the others to rob the old crazy man, — the crazy man being the marquis; his fellow lodgers having come to believe that a life which did not pass through the sieve of their own appreciations was first an unrea-

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sonable, and then an insane one. In short, the habits and ways of the marquis, his sons, and his servants gave rise to ill-will among his neighbors, and brought the latter, by degrees, to that state of mind in which ignorant persons recoil at no baseness if it can do harm to an adversary they have themselves created.

Monsieur d'Espard was a noble, just as his wife was a great lady, — two striking types now so rare in France that an observer might count the persons who offer a complete realization of them. These two characters are founded on primitive ideas, on beliefs, so to speak, inborn, on habits, acquired from infancy, which no longer exist. To believe in pure blood, in a privileged race, to put himself in thought above other men, — must not such a man from his very birth have measured the distance which separates patricians from the people? To command, he must never have known an equal; and education must have enforced ideas which nature inspires in such men, whose brow she crowns before their mother's kiss is laid there. These ideas and this education are no longer possible in France, where, for the last forty years luck has seized the right to make nobles by taking them from bloody battle-fields, gilding them with glory, crowning them with the halo of genius; where the abolition of entails and the consequent partitioning of property has forced the noble to occupy himself with his own affairs instead of being occupied by the affairs of the State; where personal grandeur can be acquired only by long and patient labor, — an era wholly novel.

Considered as a relic of that great body called feudalism, Monsieur d'Espard deserves respectful admira-

tion. If he believed himself, through his blood, above his fellow-men, he believed also in all the obligations of nobility; he possessed the virtues and the force that it demands. His sons he had brought up to the same principles; to them he had communicated from their cradles the religion of his caste. A profound sense of their dignity, pride in their name, the certainty of being great in themselves, gave them the characteristics of royal honor, knightly courage, and the protecting kindness of the lords of a manor. Their manners, in harmony with these ideas, would have seemed noble among princes, but they wounded the dwellers in the Latin quarter, — a land of equality if ever there was one, where, from the lesser to the greater, all men denied the privileges of nobility to a noble without money, for the same reason that they grant them to a wealthy burgher.

In the father as well as in the children external appearance and soul were in harmony. Monsieur d'Espard, now about forty-four years of age, might have served as a model by which to exhibit the aristocracy of nobility to the nineteenth century. He was fair and slender; his face had that natural distinction in its contour and general expression which tells of noble sentiments; but it bore the impress of a cold reserve which seemed to demand too much respect. His aquiline nose, turned at the tip from left to right (a slight deviation that was not without grace), his blue eyes, his high forehead, rather prominent under the eyebrows, which formed a thick line that overshadowed the eyes, were all signs of an upright mind, capable of perseverance, and of great loyalty, though

at the same time they gave a rather singular air to his physiognomy. The projection of the forehead might be thought to indicate a certain degree of eccentricity, and the thick eyebrows meeting over the nose added to this apparent singularity. His hands were white and delicately cared-for, his feet were narrow, and the insteps high. His speech was hesitating, not only in utterance, which, at times, was almost stuttering, but also in the expression of ideas; his thought and his speech produced upon the mind of his hearer the effect of a man who flits from point to point, touches and fingers and leaves everything, finishing nothing. This defect, purely external, contrasted with the decision of a mouth that was very firm, and with the generally determined character of the head. His rather jerky manner of walking seemed allied to his method of speech. These singularities of person contributed to confirm the popular impression of eccentricity. In spite of his elegance, he was systematically economical in dress; he wore for three or four years the same black coat, brushed with the utmost care by his devoted valet.

As for his sons, they were both handsome, and endowed by nature with a grace which did not exclude a certain expression of aristocratic disdain. They had the brightness of eye, the freshness of color, and the transparency of skin which denote pure morals, systematic habits, and the regular alternation of work and play. Both had black hair, blue eyes, and their father's crooked nose; but their mother had transmitted to them the dignity of speech, glance, and bearing which is hereditary among the Blamont-Chauvrys.

Their voices, pure as crystal, possessed the gift of touching the heart by soft, flowing tones that exercised a great fascination; in short, they had the voice a woman would have wished to hear after receiving the bright flame of their eyes. But, more than all this, they preserved the modesty of their pride, a chaste reserve, a *noli me tangere* in their demeanor. The eldest, Comte Clément d'Espard, was just entering his sixteenth year. For the last two years he had ceased to wear the pretty English jacket which his brother the Vicomte Camille d'Espard still wore. The count, who had now left the school of Henri IV., was dressed like a young man enjoying the first delights of elegance. His father had thought best not to make him go through a useless year in philosophy, but was trying to give a sort of link to his already acquired knowledge by a course of speculative mathematics. At the same time the marquis taught the lad the oriental languages, the laws of European diplomacy, heraldry, history at its fountain-head, that is to say, the history of treaties, charters, authentic documents, and the record of ordinances. The younger brother, Camille, had just begun his rhetoric.

The day on which Popinot set out to examine Monsieur d'Espard was a Thursday, and a holiday. At nine o'clock in the morning, before their father was awake, the two lads were playing in the garden. Clément was opposing, as best he could, his brother's desire to go to a pistol-gallery, where Camille had never yet been, and the latter was teasing his brother to obtain the coveted permission from their father. The viscount was apt to take advantage of being the

younger and the weaker, and took delight in a contest with his brother. They now began to quarrel and struggle like schoolboys. The noise they made in chasing each other round the garden awoke their father, who went to the window, unseen by them in the heat of the conflict. He stood there, watching, with pleasure, the two lads as they wrestled together, interlaced like snakes, their faces glowing with the exertion of all their strength. As they struggled their eyes flashed lightning, their limbs were twisted into living ropes; they fell, they scrambled up, they caught each other again like athletes in a circus, giving their father, as he watched them, one of those happinesses which compensate for the keenest pain of a troubled life.

Two persons, who were tenants of the house, chanced to observe the scene, and immediately reported to others that the old crazy man was amusing himself by inciting his sons to fight. Several heads appeared at the windows. The marquis, presently perceiving them, said a word to his sons, who at once climbed upon the window-sill, and jumped into the room, where Clément obtained the permission wanted by Camille. Meanwhile the tale of this new sign of craziness spread through the house.

When Popinot, accompanied by his clerk, arrived at the door about mid-day, and asked for Monsieur d'Espard, the portress took him up to the third floor, telling him, as she went along, how Monsieur d'Espard, no later than that very morning, had set his two children to fighting, and laughed, like the monster that he was, when he saw the younger biting the elder till the

blood came; no doubt he'd be glad enough if they killed themselves.

"Don't ask me why," she concluded; "he does n't know himself."

As she said these decisive words they had reached the landing on the third floor and were standing before a door bearing notices of the issue, in successive parts, of the "Picturesque History of China." This muddy landing, the dirty balusters, the door on which the former printing-office had left its grimy marks, the rickety windows and the ceilings where various apprentices had drawn fantastic gnomes with the smoky flame of their tallow candles, the mass of papers and rubbish heaped in the corners, intentionally, or by sheer neglect, — in short, all the details of the scene that now presented itself to the eyes of Popinot agreed so well with the allegations of the marquise that the judge, in spite of his impartiality, was inclined to believe her.

"Here you are, monsieur," said the portress. "Here 's the manufacture where the Chinese eat enough to feed the whole quarter."

The clerk smiled as he looked at the judge, and Popinot himself had some difficulty in keeping his countenance. The pair entered the first room, where was an old man who appeared to combine the duties of office-boy, shopman, and cashier. He was evidently the *Maître Jacques* of China. Long shelves, on which were piled the published numbers, went round the walls of the room, at the farther end of which a wooden partition with a wire screen, covered within by a green curtain, formed an office. A low opening in the

screen, through which the money passed, showed the position of what might be called the counting-room.

"Monsieur d'Espard?" said Popinot, addressing the old man, who was dressed in a gray blouse.

The latter opened the door of a second room, where the judge and his clerk saw a venerable old man with white hair, simply dressed, but decorated with the cross of Saint-Louis, sitting before a desk, who stopped comparing colored pages to look at the newcomers. This room was a very modest apartment, filled with books and proof-sheets. In it was a black wooden table, at which, no doubt, some person now absent was in the habit of working.

"Is monsieur the Marquis d'Espard?" said Popinot.

"No, monsieur," said the old man, rising. "Do you wish to see him?" he added, advancing toward them, and showing by his demeanor the manners and habits of a gentleman.

"We wish to see him on a matter that is entirely personal to himself," replied Popinot.

"D'Espard, here are two gentlemen who want you," said the old man, entering a third room, where the marquis was sitting near the fireplace reading a newspaper.

This last office had a shabby carpet, and the windows were draped with gray linen curtains; the furniture consisted, solely, in a few mahogany chairs, two arm-chairs, a rolling-topped secretary, a desk *à la* Tronchin, and on the fireplace a miserable clock and two old candlesticks. The old man ushered in Popinot and his clerk, and placed chairs for them, inviting them to sit down, as though he were master of the

establishment. After the usual salutations, during which the judge observed the insane man closely, the marquis very naturally inquired what was the object of the visit. Here Popinot looked significantly, first, at the old man, and then at the marquis, as he said:

“Monsieur le marquis, I think that the nature of my functions and the inquiry that brings me here, make it desirable that we should be alone; although it is in the spirit of our laws that, in cases like these, examinations should be made with a certain domestic publicity. I am a judge of one of the Lower courts of the Department of the Seine, and I have been appointed by the chief-justice to examine you as to certain facts set forth in a request for a commission in lunacy upon you, presented by Madame la Marquise d’Espard.”

The old man withdrew. When the judge and the marquis were alone Popinot’s clerk went to the door and closed it; then he seated himself, without ceremony, at the desk *à la* Tronchin, unrolled his papers, and prepared to write down the examination.

VII.

THE EXAMINATION.

POPINOT had not ceased to keep his eye on Monsieur d'Espard; he observed the effect of his announcement, cruel, indeed, to a man in his senses. The marquis, whose face was usually pale, like that of most fair persons, became suddenly scarlet with anger. He quivered slightly, sat down, laid aside his newspaper, and lowered his eyes. But he soon recovered the dignity of a gentleman, and looked at the judge, as if to find on his countenance some indications of his character.

"Why have I not been informed, before, of that petition?" he asked.

"Monsieur le marquis, the persons for whom such commissions are requested, being supposed not to be in their right minds, such notifications are thought useless. The duty of the court is, in the first place, to verify the allegations of the petition."

"Very true," said the marquis. "Therefore, monsieur, have the goodness to point out to me the manner in which I ought now to act."

"You need only answer my inquiries, omitting no detail," replied Popinot. "However delicate may be the reasons which have led you to act in a manner which gives Madame d'Espard a pretext for making

this petition, speak freely, and without fear. It is unnecessary to point out to you that a magistrate knows his duty, and that in such occurrences as these the utmost secrecy —”

“Monsieur,” interrupted the marquis, whose face expressed a genuine grief, “if from my explanations it should appear that Madame d’Espard has been to blame, what would happen?”

“The court would probably censure her in giving the reasons for its decision.”

“Would that censure be optional with the judge? If, before answering you, I were to stipulate that nothing derogatory to Madame d’Espard should be said in case your decision is favorable to me, would the court regard my wishes?”

The judge looked at the marquis, and the two men then and there exchanged thoughts of true nobility.

“Noël,” said Popinot to his clerk, “go into the next room; if I want you I will call you. Monsieur,” he said to the marquis, as soon as the clerk had retired, “if, as I am inclined to believe, there is some misunderstanding in this matter, I can promise you that the court will regard your wishes and act with courtesy. The first fact alleged by Madame d’Espard, and the most serious fact of all,” he continued, after a slight pause, “is one on which I must ask you to enlighten me. It relates to the squandering of your property on a Madame Jeanrenaud, widow of a boatman, or rather, on her son, a colonel, for whom you have exhausted the favor you enjoy from the king, a favor that you ought to have employed for your own family. The petition asserts that this friendship for the Jean-

renauds exceeds all legitimate sentiments, and even goes beyond the limits of morality."

A sudden redness colored the face and forehead of the marquis, his eyes moistened; then an honorable pride checked the sensibility which might seem weakness in a man.

"Monsieur," said the marquis, in a strained voice, "you throw me into strange perplexity. The motives of my conduct ought to die with me. In order to speak of them, I must disclose to you secret circumstances, I must put into your keeping the honor of my family, and — a delicate matter which, perhaps, you will appreciate — I must speak to you of myself. I hope, monsieur, that all I say will remain an absolute secret between you and me. You will surely be able to render your judicial opinion without referring to the facts of my revelation —"

"Do not be uneasy on that score, Monsieur le marquis."

"Monsieur," said the marquis, "not long after my marriage, my wife had incurred such heavy expenses that I was forced to have recourse to a loan. You know the situation of noble families under the Revolution. I was not able to employ either a bailiff or agent; in these days nobles are forced to do their own business. Most of my title-deeds had been brought to Paris, from Languedoc, Provence, and the Comtat, by my father, who feared, alas, with good reason, the researches then being made into family title-deeds and what were called in those days 'parchments of privilege.' The actual name of our family is Nègrepelisse. D'Espard is a title acquired under Henri IV., by an

alliance which gave us the property and titles of the house of Espard, — an old family of Béarn, allied to the house of Albret through its female line, — on condition that we escutcheoned its arms upon ours, namely: or, three palys sable, quartered azure, two griffin's-paws talonny gules, placed saltier-wise, with the well-known *DES PARTEM LEONIS* for motto. At the time of this alliance we lost Negrepelisse, a little town as celebrated during the religious wars as was my ancestor of that day who bore the name. That great captain was ruined by the burning of all his property by the Protestants, who did not spare a friend of Montluc. The crown was unjust towards Monsieur de Nègrepelisse; it gave him neither the marshal's bâton, nor a government, nor indemnities. King Charles IX., who loved him, died before he was able to reward him. Henri IV. did arrange the marriage I spoke of with Mademoiselle d'Esparl, which procured him the property of that family; but the property of the Negrepelisse had passed, by that time, into the hands of creditors. My great-grandfather the Marquis d'Espard was, like myself, placed very young at the head of his affairs by the death of his father, who, having dissipated his wife's fortune, left his son nothing but the entailed estates of the d'Espard family, and those were encumbered with a dowry. The young marquis, my great-grandfather, was, therefore, terribly embarrassed, and all the more so because he held an office at court. He became, however, a particular favorite of Louis XIV., and that proved his brevet of fortune. At this point, monsieur, there came upon our escutcheon a shameful stain, a stain of blood and

dishonor, which I am now employed in wiping out. I discovered a secret in the title-deeds of the Nègrepelisse estates, and I tracked it through much correspondence."

At this point of his story the marquis began to speak without stuttering; his habit of repeating words and sentences ceased; for we all know that persons who in ordinary life exhibit those defects, get rid of them the moment that some real passion inspires their speech.

"The revocation of the Edict of Nantes took place, as you know, monsieur; but perhaps you do not know that to many of the court favorites it brought wealth. Louis XIV. gave to the nobles of his court the confiscated property of those Protestants who had not already sold what they owned. Some of the persons in favor at court, 'hunted,' as it was said, in those days, the Protestants. I discovered, during my researches, that the present fortune of two of our ducal families is composed of the confiscated estates of those unfortunate merchants. I need not explain to you, a man of law, the manœuvres employed and the traps laid for refugees who had property; it will suffice you to know that the former estate of Nègrepelisse, which included twenty-two steeples and many of the town rights, was then the property of a Protestant family. Alas! my grandfather recovered it by gift from Louis XIV. This gift was the result of acts of infamous iniquity. The owner of the property, thinking it was then safe to return to France, made a mock sale, left his family in Switzerland, and returned to France, intending, perhaps, to profit by all the delays granted by the

Edict. This man was arrested by order of the governor; the friend who had pretended to buy the property revealed the truth, the poor wretch was hanged, and my grandfather received his two estates. I wish I could be ignorant of the part my grandfather took in this affair; but the governor was his uncle, and I have, unfortunately, read a letter in which the uncle told him to apply to Deodatus, — a name agreed upon by courtiers to designate the king. That letter was written in a jesting tone, apropos of this crime, which filled me with horror. In short, monsieur, the sums sent by the exiled family to ransom the life of that poor man were kept by the governor, who then put his victim to death.”

The marquis stopped, as if these memories were still too bitter for him.

“The name of that unfortunate man was Jeanrenaud,” he resumed. “And that name will explain my conduct to you. I could not think, without the deepest sorrow, of the secret shame thus laid upon our family honor. That fortune enabled my grandfather to marry a Navarreins-Lansac, the heiress of the younger branch, then much richer than the elder branch of the Navarreins. My father consequently became one of the largest land-owners in the kingdom. He was able to marry my mother, a Grandlieu of the younger branch. Though ill-acquired, our property has been strangely beneficial to us! I resolved to repair the evil we had done. I wrote to Switzerland, and was soon on the traces of the Protestant family. I found that the present heirs, reduced to the utmost poverty, had left Fribourg and returned to France.

Before long I discovered in Monsieur Jeanrenaud, a lieutenant of cavalry under Bonaparte, the only remaining heir of that unfortunate family. To my eyes, monsieur, the rights of the Jeanrenauds were plain. But to what courts could they apply to recover them? Their court of justice was in heaven — or rather,” said the marquis, putting his hand on his heart, “it was here. I could not endure that my children should think of me as I thought of my father and my grandfathers; I wished to leave them an escutcheon without a stain; I could not suffer my nobility to be a lie. I found in Monsieur Jeanrenaud and his mother two persons of strict probity; to hear them you would think that they had robbed me. In spite of my urgency, they have only been willing to accept the value of their estates, such as it was at the time the king confiscated them. The sum agreed upon was eleven hundred thousand francs, which they insisted on my paying as convenient to myself and without interest. To do this, I was forced to lay by my income for many years. And here, monsieur, I come to the moment when I began to lose certain illusions which I had had on the nature and character of my wife. When I proposed to her to leave Paris and live for a time on one of my estates, where, with half her income, we could still live honorably and make this restitution (which I explained to her) far more rapidly, Madame d’Espard treated my proposal as if I were insane. I then, for the first time, discovered her true nature. She would have sanctioned without scruple my grandfather’s conduct, and would have laughed at the Huguenot’s death. Outraged by her

coldness and by her want of feeling for her children, whom she agreed to let me take without regret, I resolved to leave her her own fortune and my house. It was, after all, as she observed to me, not her place to assist in paying for my mad follies. Not having, therefore, enough to live upon and provide for the education of my children, I decided to bring them up myself and to make men of honor and gentlemen of them. By placing my property in the public funds I have been able to pay off my great obligation much sooner than I expected, because I profited by the great rise in such securities. Reserving four thousand francs a year for the subsistence of my sons and myself, it would have taken me eighteen years, paying sixty thousand a year, to free myself wholly; whereas, lately, I have been able to pay off the balance of the eleven hundred thousand francs that were due. Thus, I have the happiness of completing this restitution without doing the slightest injury to my children. I have now told you the reason for the payments I have made to Madame Jeanrenaud and her son."

"Then," said the judge, restraining the emotion which this statement caused him, "Madame la marquise knew the motives of your retirement?"

"Yes, monsieur."

Popinot shook his shoulders expressively, rose suddenly, and opened the door of the room.

"Noël, you can go," he said to his clerk. "Monsieur," he continued, "though what you have just said suffices to enlighten me, I should wish to hear your replies to certain other facts alleged in the petition. It seems that you have undertaken here a commercial

enterprise that is not in accordance with the habits of a man of your station."

"We cannot speak of that matter here," replied the marquis, making the judge a sign to follow him out. "Nouvion," he continued, to the old gentleman in the next room, "I am going down to my own rooms; the boys will be home soon; you'll dine with us, won't you?"

"Then these are not your own apartments, Monsieur le marquis?" said Popinot, as they reached the staircase.

"No, monsieur. I hired those rooms for the enterprise you mentioned. See," he added, pointing to a poster on the wall, "this History is being brought out by one of the most distinguished publishers in Paris, and not by me."

The marquis then took the judge into the rooms on the ground-floor, saying to him: "These are my apartments, monsieur."

Popinot was naturally moved by the poetic charm, more found than sought for, which emanated from the very panels of the walls. The weather was magnificent; the windows were open; the air from the garden filled the salon with the scents of vegetation; the sunbeams brightened and played upon the wainscotings, otherwise too brown in tone. Beholding that scene, Popinot judged rightly that no insane man was capable of producing that sweet harmony, the influence of which came over him at once.

"I should like to have just such a home," he thought to himself. "Shall you soon leave this quarter?" he asked, aloud.

"I hope to," replied the marquis, "but I shall wait till my youngest boy has finished his studies, and the character of both my sons is formed before introducing them to the world, and placing them near their mother. Besides, after giving them the solid education they now possess, I want to complete it by making them travel through Europe and see men and things, and learn to speak the languages they have studied. Monsieur," he said, making the judge sit down in the salon, "I could not tell you about that Chinese publication before my old friend, the Comte de Novion, an *émigré* who returned to France without any means whatever of support, and with whom I engaged in this affair, less for myself than for him. Without letting him know the motives of my retirement, I told him I was, like himself, ruined; but that I had just enough to undertake a speculation in which he could be usefully employed. My former tutor was the Abbé Grozier, whom Charles X. appointed, at my request, librarian of the Arsenal library. The Abbé Grozier possessed an extraordinary knowledge of China, its history, and its manners and customs; he made me a sharer in it at an age when it is difficult not to be enthusiastic over the things we learn. At twenty-five years of age I knew the Chinese language, and I must own that I have never been able to divest myself of an extreme admiration for that people, who have conquered their conquerors, whose annals go back to a period incontestably earlier than the remotest mythological and biblical eras, who, by immutable institutions have preserved the integrity of their borders, whose vast public works are gigantic, their system of

administration perfect, who regard the *beau idéal* as a principle of art, and have carried luxury and industry to so high a degree that we cannot surpass it at any point; while they equal us in those things where we think ourselves superior. But, monsieur, allow me to say, that if I do, sometimes, jestingly compare China with the condition of our European states, I am not a Chinaman, I am a French gentleman. If you have any doubts as to the financial part of this enterprise, I can show you that we have two thousand five hundred subscribers to this literary, iconographic, statistical, and religious work, the importance of which has been very generally appreciated. As for me, I have had in view the possibility of giving my sons a few enjoyments. The money it has brought in has enabled me to pay for their fencing-lessons, their horses, their dress, their theatres, the various masters they have had, the canvases they daub, the books they want to own, — in short, all those youthful fancies which it gives a father such happiness to gratify. If I had been forced to deny such enjoyments to my poor boys, who have been so brave in their studies, the sacrifice I have made to the honor of our name would have been doubly painful. It is true, monsieur, that the twelve years during which I have retired from the world have cost me complete oblivion at court. I have abandoned my political career; I have lost my historical position, and the distinction that my own life and deeds might have bequeathed to my children; but our house has really lost nothing; my sons will distinguish it. If I am unable to obtain the peerage myself, they will win it, by devoting themselves to

the interests of their country and rendering her those services which can never be forgotten. So that in cleansing the past of our family I have really secured it a noble future. Is not that a glorious task to have done, though secretly, and with no outward glory attaching to it? Have you any other questions to put to me, monsieur?"

At this moment the noise of several horses was heard below in the court-yard.

"There they are," said the marquis.

Presently the two lads, whose dress was both simple and elegant, ran into the room, booted, spurred, and gloved, and gayly flourishing their whips. Their animated faces brought in with them the freshness and life of the outer air; they were sparkling with health. Both came up to press their father's hand, exchanging with him, as between friends, a glance of silent affection; then they bowed stiffly to the judge. Popinot reflected that it was quite unnecessary to question the father as to his relations with his sons.

"Well, have you amused yourselves?" asked the marquis.

"Yes, papa; and I hit the bull's eye six times in twelve shots,—the first time of trying!" cried Camille.

"Where did you ride?"

"To the Bois, where we saw mamma."

"Did she stop?"

"No, we were going so fast at the time that perhaps she did not see us," replied Clément.

"But you ought to have gone up and presented yourselves."

"I have noticed, papa, that she does n't like us to do so in public, — we are too big," added Clément, in a low voice.

The judge's ears were quick enough to hear the words, which caused a slight frown on the father's face. Popinot took delight in this little scene between the father and sons. His eyes, filled with a sort of tenderness, returned again and again to the face of the marquis, whose features, countenance, and manners presented the idea of honor in its noblest form, — high-minded and chivalric honor, nobleness in all its beauty.

"You — you see, monsieur," said the marquis, stuttering again, "you see that the law — the law may enter here — here at any time. If there is madness — madness it must be in the children, who are a little crazy about their father; though, indeed, the father is very crazy about the children. But it is a sane insanity, monsieur," he added, smiling.

At this moment the voice of Madame Jeanrenaud was heard in the antechamber, and the good woman made her way into the salon in spite of the remonstrances of the valet.

"I don't take four roads to get my ends," she was saying. "Yes, Monsieur le marquis," making a bow all round, "I must speak to you at once — *Parbleu!*" she cried, interrupting herself, "have I come too late? there 's the police judge!"

"Police!" cried the two lads.

"There were mighty good reasons why I did n't find you at home," she continued, addressing Popinot, "since you are here. Ah, bah! the law is always

about when there's harm to be done. I've come, Monsieur le marquis, to tell you that my son and I have agreed to return you everything, because our honor is concerned in it. My son and I would rather give up everything than that you should be grieved. Faith! your people must be as stupid as jugs without handles to call *you* a lunatic!"

"A lunatic! our father?" cried the two boys, pressing up against him. "What does it all mean?"

"Hush, madame," said Popinot.

"Leave us, my children," said the marquis.

The two lads went into the garden without making any observation, uneasy though they were.

"Madame," said the judge, "the sums that Monsieur le marquis has paid you were legally due, though they have been paid in virtue of a sense of honor that is unusually high. If persons possessing confiscated property — no matter how acquired, perhaps treacherously — were compelled, after a hundred and fifty years, to make restitution, we should find few families owning legitimate property in France. The estates of Jacques Cœur enriched twenty noble families; the shameless confiscations of the English to the profit of their adherents, when England possessed a part of France, have made the fortune of several of our princely houses. The laws allow Monsieur le marquis to dispose of the income of his property even to giving it away, without exposing him to a charge of dissipation. The removal of a man from the managing of his estates as insane must rest on the absence of all reason in his actions. Now, in this case, the reason of the payments which have been made to you

is found in the most sacred of all motives, and the most honorable. Therefore, you can justly keep those payments and leave the world to basely interpret a noble act. In Paris the purest virtue is the object of the vilest calumnies. It is unfortunate that the present state of society should render this conduct of Monsieur le marquis sublime. I would, for the honor of our land, that such acts were matters of course; but customs and morals are now such that I am forced, by comparison, to regard Monsieur d'Espard as a man who deserves a crown rather than the threat of a lunatic asylum. During the whole course of a long judicial life I have seen and heard nothing which has so moved me as what I have this day heard and seen. But there is nothing extraordinary in finding virtue under its noblest form when put in practice by men of the highest classes. After thus explaining myself, Monsieur le marquis, I hope you will feel sure of my silence, and that you will have no further uneasiness about the judgment which will be rendered, — if, indeed, there should be any judgment."

"Come, that's right," said Madame Jeanrenaud, "there's a judge for you! Bless us! my dear monsieur, I'd kiss you if I was n't too ugly; you talk like a book."

The marquis held out his hand to Popinot, and Popinot gently struck his own into it, giving that great hero of private life a look full of penetrating sympathy, to which the marquis responded by a smile. The two natures, so full, so rich, one bourgeois and divine, the other noble and glorious, had softly met in unison, without the jar, without the excitement of emotion,

but gently, as if two rays of purest light had melted into one. The father of the pauper quarter felt worthy to press the hand of a man twice noble, and the marquis, in the depths of his soul, felt that the hand of the judge was one from which came, ceaselessly, the treasures of benevolence.

"Monsieur le marquis," said Popinot, bowing, "I am happy to tell you that after the first words between us I felt that the services of my clerk were not needed." Then he went closer to the marquis, and led him aside to a window, and said, in a low voice, "It is high time that you should go back to your own house and live there. In my opinion, Madame la marquise is acting under an influence which you ought to put an end to at once."

Popinot departed, but he looked back several times in the court-yard and in the street, moved by the memory of these scenes. They belong to those which implant themselves in the memory, to bloom again at certain times and seasons when the soul is in need of consolation.

"That apartment would suit me exactly," he thought to himself, as he reached home.

The next day, about ten o'clock, Popinot, who had written out his report the night before, set forth to the Palais with the full intention of doing prompt and signal justice. As he entered the robing-room to get his gown and put on his bands, the servant in charge of the room told him that the President of the Courts begged him to go to him at once, before he went to his own office. Popinot did so immediately.

"Good-morning, my dear Popinot," said the magistrate, taking him aside.

"Is the matter serious?" asked the judge.

"No, a mere trifle," replied the president. "The Keeper of the Seals, with whom I dined last night, took me aside after dinner. He had heard that you went to take tea with Madame d'Espard, in connection with a case which your chief-justice intrusted to you. He made me understand that it would be better if you were not allowed to sit in that case."

"Ah! monsieur, but I can prove that I left Madame d'Espard's house the moment that tea was brought in; besides, my conscience —"

"Yes, yes!" interrupted the president, "we all, the court, the Palais everyone knows *you*. I shall not repeat what I say of you to his Excellency. But you know, my dear Popinot, Cæsar's wife must not be suspected. We don't make this silly matter an affair of discipline, only of caution. Between ourselves, it relates less to you than to the interests of our court."

"But if you knew the sort of —" began Popinot, pulling his report from his pocket.

"I know perfectly well that you have shown the utmost independence in this affair. I, myself, when I was a judge in the provinces, I have often taken much more than a cup of tea with persons who had cases to be tried before me. But it suffices that the Keeper of the Seals has taken the matter up; the matter may get talked about, and it is all important that our courts should avoid such discussions. All conflict with public opinion is dangerous for constituted bodies, even if the right is on the side of the latter, because the weapons are not equal. Journalism can say all, and suggest all; but our dignity forbids

us to make any defence, or even reply. Besides, I have already conferred with the chief-justice of your court, and he has appointed Monsieur Camusot to take your place on this case. In short, I must ask you to relinquish it as a personal service to me. In return you shall have the cross of the Legion of honor, which has long been your due, and which I shall now make it my business to procure for you."

Beholding, at this moment, Monsieur Camusot, a judge recently promoted from the provinces to Paris, who advanced smiling and bowing to the president and judge, Popinot could not restrain a sarcastic smile. This pale and fair young man, filled with secret ambition, seemed ready to hang and unhang at the will of the kings of the earth, the innocent and guilty alike. Popinot retired, bowing to the president, and disdaining to defend himself farther from the lying accusation brought against him.

THE RURAL BALL.

THE RURAL BALL.

TO HENRI DE BALZAC,

HIS BROTHER,

HONORÉ.

I.

A REBELLIOUS YOUNG GIRL.

THE Comte de Fontaine, head of one of the most ancient families in Poitou, had served the cause of the Bourbons with courage and intelligence during the war which the Vendéans made against the Republic. After escaping the dangers that threatened the royalist leaders during that stormy period of contemporaneous history, he said, gayly: "I am one of those who are fated to be killed on the steps of the throne." This little jest was not without truth, as to a man left for dead on the bloody day of the Quatre-Chemins.

Though ruined by confiscations, the faithful Vendéan refused the lucrative places which were offered to him by the Emperor Napoleon. Uncompromising in his religion of aristocracy he had blindly followed its axioms when he thought proper to take a wife. In spite of the offers of a rich revolutionary parvenu, who was willing to pay a high price for such an alli-

ance, he married a Demoiselle de Kergarouët, a girl without fortune, but whose family is one of the oldest in Brittany. At the time of the Restoration, Monsieur de Fontaine was burdened with a numerous family. Though he did not share the ideas of the greedy nobles who begged for favors, he yielded to his wife's request, left his country domain, the modest revenues of which barely sufficed for the needs of his children, and came to Paris. Shocked by the avidity shown by many of his old comrades for the places and dignities of the new régime, he was about to return to Poitou; when he received an official letter in which a well-known minister informed him of his appointment to the rank of brigadier-general, in virtue of the ordinance which allowed the officers of the Catholic armies to count the twenty years of Louis XVIII.'s exiled reign as years of service. Some days later the count received, without solicitation, the cross of the Legion of honor and that of the order of Saint-Louis.

Shaken in his resolution by these successive favors, which he thought he owed to the monarch's memory, he no longer contented himself with taking his family, as he had done religiously every Sunday morning, to the Salle des Maréchaux to shout "Vive le roi!" when the princes passed on their way to Mass; he asked the favor of a private audience. This audience, instantly granted, had, however, nothing private about it. The royal salon was full of old royalists, whose powdered heads seen at a certain level looked like a carpet of snow. There, the count met with a number of his old companions in arms, who received him rather stiffly; but the princes were *adorable*, a term of

enthusiasm which escaped him when the most gracious of his masters, whom the count supposed to know barely his name, came up and pressed his hand, and called him the purest and most disinterested of the Vendéans.

But in spite of this ovation, none of these august personages thought of asking him the amount of his losses in their cause, nor that of the money he had generously poured out for the maintenance of the Catholic army. He found, too late, that he had made war at his own expense. Toward the end of the evening he thought he might risk a witty allusion to the state of his affairs. His Majesty laughed heartily; any speech that bore the stamp of wit was sure of pleasing him; but for all that, he replied with one of those royal jests whose soft speciousness is more to be feared than a reprimand. One of the king's confidential intimates soon after approached the Vendéan and let him know, in a guarded and civil manner, that the time had not yet come to make claims upon the masters, for there were others on the tapis whose services were of longer date than his. The count on this retired from the group which formed a semi-circle in front of the august royal family. Then, after disengaging his sword, not without difficulty, from the midst of the weak old legs which surrounded him, he made his way on foot across the court-yard of the Tuileries, to a hackney-coach which he had left upon the quay. With that restive spirit which characterizes the nobility of the *vieille roche*, in whom the memory of the League and the Barricades is not yet extinct, he grumbled aloud, as he drove along, on the change that was visible at court.

"Formerly," he said, "every man could speak freely to the king of his affairs; the seigneurs could ask at their ease for money and offices; but now it appears we cannot even ask without scandal for the sums we have advanced in his service. *Morbleu!* the cross of Saint-Louis and the rank of general are no equivalent for the three hundred thousand francs that from first to last I have spent on the royal cause. I *will* speak face to face with the king in his private cabinet."

This scene chilled the zeal of Monsieur de Fontaine, all the more because his requests for an audience were left without reply. He saw the intruders of the Empire successful in obtaining various offices reserved under the old monarchy for the best families.

"All is lost," he said, one morning. "The king has never been anything but revolutionary. If it were not for MONSIEUR, who never derogates from the true régime, and consoles his faithful followers, I don't know what would become of the crown of France. Their cursèd constitutional system is the worst of all governments, and will never suit France. Louis XVIII. and Monsieur Beugnot ruined everything for us at Saint-Ouen."

The count, in despair, was again preparing to return to his country home, abandoning all his claims to indemnity; but, at that moment, the events of the 20th of March produced a new tempest, which threatened to engulf the legitimate king and his defenders. Like those generous souls who will not send out their servants in the rain, Monsieur de Fontaine borrowed money on his estate to follow the retreating monarchy, without knowing whether his emigration would stand

him in better stead than his former devotion. But, having observed that the companions of the king's former exile stood higher in his favor than those who stayed behind and protested arms in hand against the Republic, he may have considered that this journey into foreign lands would be more to his benefit than a perilous and active service in France. He was, therefore, to use the saying of our wittiest and ablest diplomatist, one of the five hundred faithful servants who shared the exile of the court to Ghent, and one of the fifty thousand who returned from it.

During this short absence of royalty, Monsieur de Fontaine had the luck of being employed by Louis XVIII., and of finding more than one occasion to give him proofs of great political sense and sincere attachment to his person. One evening, when the king had nothing better to do, he remembered the witty remark the count had made to him at the Tuileries. The old Vendéan did not let the opportunity slip; he related his history so cleverly that the king, who forgot nothing, was likely to remember it in due season. The royal literary man soon after noticed the graceful turn of phrase given to certain notes he had confided to the count to write for him; and this little merit, together with his wit, placed Monsieur de Fontaine in the king's memory as one of the most loyal servants of the crown. At the second Restoration the count was appointed one of the envoys extraordinary to go through the departments and pass judgment on the guilty actors of the rebellion; he used his terrible power moderately. As soon as this temporary jurisdiction was over he entered the Council of State, became a

deputy, spoke little, listened much, and changed considerably in his opinions. Certain circumstances, unknown to biographers, brought him into such intimate relations with the king that the witty monarch one day said to him:—

“Friend Fontaine, I shall never dream of appointing you to any post. Neither you nor I, if we were *employés*, could keep our places, on account of our opinions. Representative government has one good thing about it; it saves us the trouble we formerly had in getting rid of our secretaries of State. The Council is now a sort of wayside inn, where public opinion sends us queer travellers; however, we can always find some place to put a faithful servant.”

This somewhat satirical opening was followed by a special ordinance giving Monsieur de Fontaine the administration of a part of the Crown domain. In consequence of the intelligent attention with which he listened to the sarcasms of his royal friend, his name was often on his Majesty's lips whenever there was a commission to be created which offered a lucrative appointment. The count had the good sense to say nothing about the favors the king showed him; and he had the art of entertaining his royal master by a piquant manner of telling a story during those familiar conversations in which Louis XVIII. took as much delight as he did in political anecdotes, diplomatic cancons (if we may use that word in such connection), or the reading and writing of elegant little notes. It is well known that the details of his “governmentability,” as the august jester called it, amused him infinitely.

Thanks to the good sense, wit, and cleverness of the Comte de Fontaine, every member of his numerous family, young as they were, ended, as he said in jest to his master, by fastening like silk-worms on the leaves of the budget. His eldest son obtained an eminent place in the permanent magistracy. The second, a mere captain before the Restoration, received a legion on the return from Ghent, entered the Royal Guard, thence into the body-guard, and became a lieutenant-general after the affair of the Trocadéro. The youngest son, appointed first a sub-prefect, was soon after Master of Petitions and a director of one of the municipal departments of the city of Paris. These favors, given quietly, and kept as secret as the count's own favor with the king, were showered upon him unperceived by the public. Though the father and his three sons had each sinecures enough to give them a budgetary revenue that was nearly equal to that of a director-general, their political good luck excited no envy. In those days when the constitutional system was just established, few persons had any correct ideas as to the quiet regions of the budget, or the number of favorites who contrived to find there the equivalent of destroyed monasteries.

Monsieur le Comte de Fontaine, who had formerly boasted of never having read the Charter and had shown such displeasure at the eager avidity of courtiers, was not long in proving to his august master that he understood perfectly well the proper spirit and resources of a representative. Nevertheless, in spite of the careers opened to his three sons, Monsieur de Fontaine's numerous family was too numerous to

allow him to become a rich man all at once. In addition to his three sons he had three daughters, and he feared to wear out the bounty of the king. On reflection, he thought it better not to mention to his august master more than one at a time of these virgins, all waiting to light their lamps. The king had too much sense of the becoming to leave his work unfinished. The marriage of the first daughter with a receiver-general, Planat de Baudry, was arranged by one of those short royal sentences which cost nothing and bestow millions. One evening, when the king was sulky, he laughed on learning the existence of a second Demoiselle de Fontaine; nevertheless, he married her to a young magistrate,—of bourgeois descent, it is true, but rich, and full of talent, and he made him a baron. But when, the following year, the Vendéan let drop a few words about a Mademoiselle Émilie de Fontaine, the king replied, in his sour little voice:—

“Amicus Plato, sed magis amica natio.”

Then, a few days later, he presented his “friend Fontaine” with a rather silly quatrain, which he called an epigram, in which he teased him about three daughters produced so opportunely in the form of a trinity. If the chronicle be true, the monarch had made the unity of the three persons the point of his wit.

“Would the king deign to change his epigram into an epithalamium,” suggested the count, endeavoring to turn this freak to his profit.

“I don’t see the rhyme nor the reason of that remark,” said the king, harshly, not at all pleased at any joke about his poetry, however gentle it might be.

From that day his relations with Monsieur de Fontaine were less cordial. Kings like contradiction more than we imagine.

Émilie de Fontaine, like many youngest children, was the Benjamin of the family, and spoiled by everyone. The king's coldness was all the more distressing to the count because the marriage of this petted darling proved to be an exceedingly difficult one to carry through. To understand the obstacles in the way of it, we must enter the fine hôtel where the government official lodged with his family at the cost of the Civil List.

Émilie had spent her childhood on the Fontaine estate, enjoying that abundance which suffices to the pleasures of early youth. Her slightest wishes were laws to her sisters, brothers, mother, and even to her father. All her relations idolized her. As she reached girlhood at the very moment when her family were at the summit of fortune's favors, the enchantment of her life continued. The luxury of Paris seemed to her as natural as the wealth of flowers and fruit, and the rural opulence which had made the happiness of her earliest years. She had never been opposed in her childhood in satisfying her joyous fancies, and now, at the age of fifteen, when she was flung into the vortex of the great world, she found herself still obeyed.

Accustomed, by degrees, to the enjoyments of wealth, the elegancies of dress, gorgeous salons, and equipages became as necessary to her as the flattery, true or false, of compliments, and the fêtes and vanities of the court. Like many spoiled children, she tyrannized over those who loved her, and reserved her

coquetties for the persons who took least notice of her. Her defects grew with her growth, and her parents were soon to gather the bitter fruits of this fatal education.

At nineteen years of age, Émilie de Fontaine had not yet been willing to select, as her husband, any of the numerous young men whom her father's policy assembled at his fêtes. Although so young, she enjoyed as much freedom in society as though she were a woman. Her beauty was so remarkable that no sooner did she enter a room than she seemed to reign there; but, like kings, she had no friends, and no lovers; a better nature than hers, feeling itself the object of so much admiration, would not have repelled it as she did. No man, not even an old man, had nerve enough to contradict the opinions of a girl the mere glance of whose eyes roused love in a cold heart.

Brought up with a care that her sisters had lacked, she had various accomplishments; she painted fairly well, she spoke English and Italian, played on the piano remarkably well, and her voice, trained by the best masters, had a *timbre* which gave to her singing an irresistible charm. Witty by nature, and well-read in literature, she might have been thought, as Mascarrille says of people of quality, to have been born into the world knowing everything. She argued fluently about Italian or Flemish art, on the middle ages or the renaissance, and gave her opinion right and left on books ancient or modern, bringing out, sometimes with cruel cleverness, the defects of some work. The simplest of her remarks were received by an idolizing

crowd on their knees. She dazzled superficial persons; but as for wiser ones, her natural tact enabled her to recognize them, and to them she was so winning, so coquettish, that she escaped examination under cover of her flatteries. This attractive varnish covered an indifferent heart, an opinion, common to many young girls, that no one inhabited a sphere lofty enough to comprehend the excellence of her soul, and a personal pride based more on her birth than on her beauty. In the absence of the more ardent sentiments which, sooner or later, ravage the heart of woman, Émilie spent her youthful ardor in an immoderate worship of distinction, expressing the utmost contempt for everything plebeian. Very haughty toward the new nobility, she did her best to make her parents keep strictly to the social lines of the faubourg Saint-Germain.

This disposition in his daughter had not escaped the observing eye of Monsieur de Fontaine, who had more than once been made to wince under her sarcasms and witty sayings at the time of the marriage of her elder sisters. Logical minds might, in fact, be surprised to see the old Vendéan giving his eldest daughter to a receiver-general who had acquired possession of old seignorial property by confiscation; and the second to a magistrate too lately baronified to enable the world to forget that his father sold fagots. This notable change in the ideas of the count in his sixtieth year, a period when few men give up their fixed beliefs, was not due solely to a residence in the modern Babylon, where most provincials end by rubbing off their peculiarities; the new political conscience of the Comte de Fontaine was due far more to the counsels

and friendship of the king. That philosophical prince took pleasure in converting the Vendéan to the ideas which the march of the nineteenth century and the renovation of the monarchy demanded. Louis XVIII. desired to fuse parties as Napoleon had fused men and things; but the legitimate king, as wise, perhaps, as his rival, went to work in an opposite direction. The last head of the House of Bourbon was anxious to satisfy the *tiers état* and the followers of the Empire as the first of the Napoleons was eager to draw to himself the great lords and to endow the Church. Being the confidant of the king's thoughts, the councillor of State became insensibly one of the most influential and wisest leaders of the moderate party, who strongly desired, in the national interests, a fusion of opinions. He preached the costly principles of constitutional government, and seconded, with all his strength, the game of political see-saw which enabled his master to govern France in the midst of so many agitations. Perhaps Monsieur de Fontaine flattered himself that he should reach a peerage by one of those legislative gusts, the effects of which take the oldest politicians by surprise. One of the firmest of his acquired principles consisted in no longer recognizing any other nobility in France than that of the peerage, because the families of peers alone held the privileges.

"A nobility without privilèges," he said, "is a handle without a tool."

Thus, equally far from the party of Lafayette as from that of La Bourdonnaye, he favored, ardently, the general reconciliation from which was to issue an

era of new and brilliant destinies for France. He tried to convince the families who frequented his salons, and those whom he visited, of the few favorable chances now to be found in a military or governmental career. He advised mothers to put their sons into industrial and other professions, assuring them that military employment and the higher functions of government must end in belonging constitutionally to the younger sons of peers.

The new ideas of the Comte de Fontaine, and the marriages which resulted of his two elder daughters, had found much opposition in the bosom of his family. The Comtesse de Fontaine continued faithful to the old beliefs, as became a descendant of the Rohans through her mother. Though she opposed, for a time, the marriage of her daughters, she yielded, after a while, as all mothers would have done in her place; but she insisted that her daughter Émilie should be married in a manner to satisfy the pride which she had herself developed in that young breast.

Thus the events which might have brought only joy to this household produced a slight leaven of discord. One of the sons married Mademoiselle Mongenod, the daughter of a rich banker; another chose a girl whose father, thrice a millionaire, had made his money by salt; the third had taken to wife a Mademoiselle Grossetête, daughter of the receiver-general at Bourges. The three sisters-in-law and the two brothers-in-law finding it for their interests to enter the salons of the faubourg Saint-Germain, agreed among themselves to make a little court around Émilie. This compact of self-interests and pride was not, however, so thor-

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oughly cemented that the young sovereign did not occasionally excite revolutions in her kingdom. Scenes which good taste would have repudiated took place in private between the members of this powerful family, though they were never allowed to affect the outward show of affection assumed before the public.

Such were the general circumstances of the Fontaine household and its little domestic strife, when the king, into whose favor the count was expecting to return, was seized with his last illness. The great politician who had succeeded so well in piloting his wreck amid the storm was not long in succumbing. Uncertain as to the future, the Comte de Fontaine now made the greatest efforts to collect about his youngest daughter the *élite* of the marriageable young men. Those who have tried to solve the difficult problem of marrying a proud and fanciful daughter will understand the worries that came upon the poor Vendéan. If this event could worthily be brought about in a manner to please his precious child, the count's career in Paris for the last ten years would receive its final crown. His family, indeed, by the way it had invaded all departments of government, might be compared to the house of Austria, which threatens to overrun all Europe through its alliances. The old count therefore persevered against his daughter's objections, so much did he have her happiness at heart; though nothing could be more provoking than the way in which that impertinent girl pronounced her decisions and judged the merits of her adorers. It really seemed as if Émilie was one of those princesses in the Arabian Nights to whom all the princes of the earth were

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offered; and her objections were equally grotesque and senseless; this one was knock-kneed, that one squinted, a third was named Durand, a fourth limped, and all were too fat. Livelier, more charming, and gayer than ever when she had just rejected two or three suitors, Émilie de Fontaine rushed into all the winter fêtes, going from ball to ball, examining with her penetrating eyes the celebrities of the day, and exciting proposals which she always rejected.

Nature had given her, profusely, the advantages required for the rôle of Célimène. Tall and slender, she was able to assume a bearing that was imposing or volatile, as she pleased. Her neck, a trifle too long, enabled her to take charming attitudes of disdain or sauciness. She had made herself a fruitful repertory of those turns of the head and feminine gestures which explained, cruelly or the reverse as the case might be, her smiles and words. Beautiful black hair, thick and well-arched eyebrows gave an expression of pride to her face which coquetry and her mirror had taught her to render terrible or to modify by the fixity or the softness of her glance, by the slight inflexion or the immobility of her lips, by the coldness or the grace of her smile. When Émilie wanted to lay hold of a heart she could make her voice melodious; but when she intended to paralyze the tongue of an indiscreet worshipper she could give it a curt clearness which silenced him. Her pure white face and alabaster forehead were like the limpid surface of a lake which is ruffled by the slight breeze, and returns to its joyous serenity as the air grows still. More than one young man, the victim of her disdain, had accused

her of playing comedy. In revenge for such speeches she inspired her detractors with the desire to please her, and then subjected them pitilessly to all the arts of her coquetry. Among the young girls of fashionable society none knew better than she how to assume a haughty air to men of talent, or display that insulting politeness which makes inferiors of our equals. Wherever she went she seemed to receive homage rather than courtesies, and even in the salon of a princess she had the air of being seated on a throne.

Monsieur de Fontaine perceived, too late, how much the education of his favorite daughter had been perverted by the mistaken tenderness of her family. The admiration which the world gives to a beautiful young woman, for which it often avenges itself later, had still further exalted Émilie's pride and increased her self-confidence. General approval had developed in her the selfishness natural to spoiled children, who, like kings, amuse themselves on all who approach them. At this moment the graces of youth and the charm of native talent hid these defects from ordinary eyes; but nothing escapes the eye of a good father, and Monsieur de Fontaine sometimes attempted to explain to his daughter the true meaning of the enigmatical pages of the book of life. A vain attempt! He was made too often to groan over the capricious intractability and sarcastic cleverness of his wayward girl to persevere steadily in the difficult task of correcting her warped nature. He contented himself, finally, with giving her kindly and gentle counsel from time to time; but he had the pain of finding that his tenderest words slid from her heart like water from polished

marble. It took the old Vendéan some years to perceive the condescending manner with which his petted child received his caresses.

But there were times when with sudden caprice, apparently inexplicable in a young girl, she would shut herself up and go nowhere; at such times she complained that social life separated her from the heart of her father and mother, she grew jealous of every one, even her brothers and sisters. Then, having taken pains to create a desert around her, the strange girl threw the blame of her dissatisfied solitude and self-made troubles upon life. Armed with her twenty years' experience, she railed at fate; not perceiving that the principle of happiness is within us, she cried aloud to the things of life to give it to her. She would have gone to the ends of the earth to avoid a marriage like those of her sisters, and yet in her heart she was horribly jealous on seeing them rich and happy.

Sometimes her mother — even more the victim of her proceedings than her father — was led to think there was a tinge of madness in her. But her behavior was otherwise explicable. Nothing is more common than self-assumption in the heart of young girls placed high on the social ladder and gifted with great beauty. They are often persuaded that their mother, now forty to fifty years old, can no longer sympathize with their young souls or conceive their wants. They imagine that most mothers, jealous of their daughters, have a premeditated design to prevent them from receiving attentions or eclipsing their own claims. Hence, secret tears and muttered rebellion against imaginary maternal tyranny. From the midst of these fancied

griefs, which they make real, they draw for themselves a brilliant horoscope; their magic consists in taking dreams for realities; they resolve, in their secret meditations, to give their heart and hand to no man who does not possess such or such qualifications, and they picture to their imagination a type to which their accepted lover must, willingly or not, conform. After certain experience of life and the serious reflections which years bring to them, and after seeing the world and its prosaic course, the glowing colors of their ideal visions fade; and they are quite astonished some fine day to wake up and find themselves happy without the nuptial poesy of their dreams. At present Mademoiselle Émilie de Fontaine had resolved, in her flimsy wisdom, on a programme to which a suitor must conform in order to be accepted. Hence her disdainful comments.

"Though young, and belonging to the old nobility," she said to herself, "he must also be a peer of France, or the son of a peer. I could never bear to see our arms on the panels of my carriage without the azure mantle, or be unable to drive among the princes at Longchamps. Papa himself says the peerage is going to be the highest dignity in France. He must also be a soldier, but resign, if I wish him to; and I want him decorated, so that sentries may salute us."

But the above qualifications would amount to very little, she thought, if this being did not also possess great amiability, an elegant manner, intellect, and a slender form. Slenderness, grace of body, fugitive though it might be, especially under a representative government, was absolutely indispensable. Made-

moiselle de Fontaine had a certain vision in her mind's eye which served her as model. The young man who at her first glance did not meet the required conditions never obtained a second.

"Oh, heavens! how fat he is!" was with her the expression of an abiding contempt.

To hear her, one would think that persons of honest corpulence were incapable of feelings, dangerous husbands, beings unworthy of existing in civilized society. Though considered a beauty at the East, plumpness was to her eyes a misfortune in women and a crime in men. These fantastic opinions amused her hearers, thanks to a certain liveliness of elocution. Nevertheless, the count felt that his daughter's pretensions would, sooner or later, become a subject of ridicule, especially to clear-sighted women of little charity. He also feared that as she grew older her fantastic ideas might change to ill-breeding; and he saw plainly that more than one actor in her comedy, displeased at her refusal, was only waiting for some unlucky incident to avenge himself. Consequently, during the first winter after the accession of Charles X., he redoubled his efforts, seconded by his sons and his sons-in-law, to fill his salons with the best marriageable men in Paris, trusting that at last this assemblage of suitors would put an end to his daughter's fancies, and force her to decide. He felt an inward satisfaction in having done his duty as a father; but no result appearing, he resolved to have a firm explanation with her, and toward the end of Lent she was summoned to his study.

She came in singing an air from the "Barbriere."

"Good-morning, papa. What do you want me for so early?"

The words were chanted as if they were the last line of the air she was singing; then she kissed the count, not with that familiar tenderness which makes the filial sentiment so sweet a thing, but carelessly, like a mistress, sure of pleasing, whatever she may do.

"My dear child," said Monsieur de Fontaine, gravely, "I have sent for you to talk very seriously about your future. It has now become a necessity for you to choose a husband who will make your happiness lasting — "

"My dear papa," replied Émilie, in her most caressing tones, "the armistice that you and I agreed upon as to my lovers has not yet expired."

"Émilie, you must cease to jest on a subject so important. For some time past all the efforts of those who love you truly, my child, have been directed to finding you a suitable establishment, and you would be guilty of the greatest ingratitude if you made light of the interest which I am not the only one to spend upon you."

Hearing these words, the young girl selected an arm-chair and carried it to the other side of the fireplace, directly opposite to her father, sat down in it with too solemn an air not to be sarcastic, and crossed her arms over a pelerine of innumerable snowy ruches. Glancing covertly at her father's anxious face, she said, saucily:—

"I never heard you say, papa, that the heads of departments made their communications in their dressing-gowns. But, no matter," she added, smil-

ing, "the populace are not punctilious. Now, then, bring in your bill, and make your official representations."

"I shall not always be able to make them, my silly child. Now listen to me, Émilie. I do not intend much longer to compromise my character for dignity, which is the inheritance of my children, by recruiting this regiment of suitors whom you send to the right-about every spring. Already you have been the cause of dangerous dissensions with certain families. I hope that you will now understand more plainly the difficulties of your position and mine. You are twenty-two years old, my dear, and you ought to have been married at least three years ago. Your brothers and sisters are well and happily established. I must tell you now that the expenses accruing from those marriages, and the style in which your mother keeps up this household, have absorbed so much of our property that I cannot afford to give you a dowry of more than a hundred thousand francs. It is my duty to make ample provision for your mother, whose future must not be sacrificed to that of her children; I should ill reward her devotion to me in the days of my poverty if I did not leave her enough to continue the comfort she now enjoys. I wish you to see, my child, that your dowry will not be in keeping with the ideas of grandeur you now indulge — Now, don't be sulky, my dear, but let us talk reasonably. Among the various young men who are looking for wives, have you noticed Monsieur Paul de Manerville?"

"Oh! he lisps; and he is always looking at his foot because he thinks it small. Besides, he is blonde, and I don't like fair men."

"Well, Monsieur de Beaudenord?"

"He is not noble. He is awkward and fat; moreover, he is so dark. It is a pity that pair could n't exchange points; the first could give his figure and his name to the second, who might return the gift in hair, and then — perhaps —"

"What have you to say against Monsieur de Rastignac?"

"Madame de Nucingen has made a banker of him," she said, maliciously.

"And our relation, the Vicomte de Portenduère?"

"That boy! who does n't know how to dance; besides, he has no fortune. Moreover, papa, none of those men have titles. I wish to be at least a countess, like my mother."

"Have you seen no one this winter who —"

"No one, papa."

"Then what do you want?"

"The son of a peer of France."

"You are crazy, my child!" said Monsieur de Fontaine, rising.

Suddenly he looked up as if to ask of heaven another dose of resignation; then, with a look of fatherly pity on the girl, who was somewhat touched, he took her hand, pressed it between his own, and said, tenderly: —

"God is my witness, poor, misguided girl! that I have conscientiously done my duty by you — Conscientiously, do I say? I mean lovingly, my Émilie. Yes, God knows that I have offered you, this winter, more than one honorable man whose character and morals were known to me as being worthy of my

child. My task is done. Émilie, from this day forth I leave you mistress of your own fate; and I feel both fortunate and unfortunate in finding myself relieved of the heaviest of all the paternal obligations. I do not know how long you may hear a voice which has, alas! never been stern to you; but it will never again say more to you than this: Remember that conjugal happiness does not depend as much on brilliant qualities or on wealth, as on reciprocal esteem and affection. Married happiness is, of its nature, modest and not dazzling. My daughter, I will accept whoever you may present to me as my son-in-law, but if you make an unhappy marriage, remember that you have no right to blame your father. I will not refuse to promote your wishes and help you; but your choice must be serious and definite. I will not compromise the respect due to my character any longer by promoting your present course."

Her father's affection and his solemn accents did really affect Mademoiselle de Fontaine sincerely; but she concealed her feelings, and sprang gayly on his knee, — for the count was again seated, and trembling with agitation. She caressed and coaxed him so prettily that the old man's brow began to clear, and when she thought him sufficiently recovered from his painful emotion she said, in a low voice: —

"I thank you for your great kindness, dear papa. Is it so very difficult to marry a peer of France? I have heard you say they were made in batches. Ah! you surely won't refuse me your advice?"

"No, my poor child, no; indeed, I will often say to you, 'Beware!' Remember that the peerage is too

new a thing in our 'governmentability,' as the late king used to say, for peers to possess large fortunes. Those who are rich want to become richer, and they are looking for heiresses for their sons wherever they can find them. It will be two hundred years before the necessity they are under to make rich marriages dies out. I don't need, I think, to warn a girl like you of the difficulties in your way. One thing I am sure of; you will never be misled by a handsome face or flattering manners to rashly attribute either sense or virtue to a stranger; you have your heart, like a good horseman, too well in hand for that. My daughter, I can only wish you good luck."

"You are laughing at me, papa. Well, listen. I declare to you that I will go and die in Mademoiselle de Condé's convent sooner than not be the wife of a peer of France."

She sprang from her father's arms and ran off, proud of being her own mistress, and singing, as she went, the *Cara non dubitare* in the "Matrimonio Segreto."

At dessert that day, Madame Planat, Émilie's elder sister, began to speak of a young American, the possessor of a great fortune, who was passionately in love with the girl, and had lately made her very brilliant proposals.

"He is a banker, I think," said Émilie, carelessly. "I don't like financial people."

"But, Émilie," said the Baron de Vilaine, the husband of her second sister, "you don't like the magistracy any better; so that really if you reject all men of property without titles, I don't see into what class you can go for a husband."

"Especially, Émilie, with your sentiments on fat men," added her brother, the lieutenant-general.

"I know very well what I want," replied the girl.

"My sister wants a noble name, a fine young man, a glorious future, and a hundred thousand francs a year, — Monsieur de Marsay, for instance," said the Baronne de Fontaine.

"I know this, my dear sister," returned Émilie. "I shall not make a foolish marriage, as I have seen so many people do. Now, to avoid, in future, these nuptial discussions, I here declare that I shall regard as a personal enemy any one who says another word to me about marriage."

A great-uncle of Émilie, a vice-admiral whose fortune had just been increased by twenty thousand francs a year through the law of indemnity, an old man of seventy, assumed the right of saying harsh truths when he pleased to his grand-niece, whom he idolized. He now remarked, as if to put a stop to the sharpness of the conversation: —

"Don't tease my poor Émilie; can't you see that she is waiting for the majority of the Duc de Bordeaux?"

A general laugh replied to the old man's jest.

"Take care I don't marry you, you old goose," retorted the girl, whose last word was fortunately lost in the hubbub.

"My children," said Madame de Fontaine, endeavoring to soften this impertinence, "Émilie, like the rest of you, will take her mother's advice."

"Oh, heavens! no; I shall take no one's advice but my own in a matter which concerns me alone," said Mademoiselle de Fontaine, very distinctly.

All eyes turned to the head of the family on hearing this speech. Every one seemed curious to see how the count would take such an attack on his dignity. Not only did the worthy Vendéan enjoy the consideration of the world at large, but, more fortunate than many fathers, he was greatly esteemed by his own family, all the members of which recognized the solid qualities which had enabled him to make the fortune of those belonging to him. He was therefore surrounded by that respect and even reverence which English families and some aristocratic families on the continent show to the head of their genealogical tree. Silence fell; the eyes of every one turned from the haughty and sullen face of the spoiled child to the stern faces of her father and mother.

"I have left *Émilie* mistress of her own fate," was the reply of the count, made in a deep voice.

All present looked at *Mademoiselle de Fontaine* with a curiosity that was mingled with pity. The words seemed to say that paternal kindness was weary of endeavoring to control a character which the family knew to be uncontrollable. The sons-in-law murmured disapprovingly; the brothers looked at their wives sarcastically. From that moment, none of them took any further interest in the marriage of the intractable girl. Her old uncle was the only person who, in his naval parlance, dared to board her, and he did, occasionally, receive her fire and return her broadside for broadside.

II.

THE BALL.

WHEN the summer season came (after the vote on the budget) this family, a true likeness of the parliamentary families on the other side of the British Channel, which have a foothold in all ministries and ten votes in the Commons, flew off like a covey of birds to the beautiful regions of Aulnay, Antony, and Châtenay. The opulent receiver-general, the husband of the eldest sister, had lately bought a country-seat in that vicinity, and though Émilie despised all plebeians, that sentiment did not lead her so far as to disdain the advantages of bourgeois wealth. She therefore accompanied her sister to her sumptuous villa, less from affection for the members of her family, who went with them, than from the rigid rule of good society, which imperiously requires all women who respect themselves to leave Paris during the summer season. The verdant meadows of Sceaux fulfilled these exactions of good taste and public duty suitably, and Émilie agreed to go there.

As it is doubtful whether the reputation of the rural ball of Sceaux has ever reached beyond the limits of the department of the Seine, it is necessary to give a few details on this hebdomadal fête, which threatened at that time to become an institution. The envi-

rons of the little town of Sceaux enjoys the reputation of delightful scenery. Perhaps, however, it is really commonplace, and owes its celebrity to the stupid ignorance of the Parisian bourgeoisie, who, issuing from the close and narrow streets in which they are buried, incline naturally to admire the plains of Beauce. Nevertheless, as the poetic woods of Aulnay, the hill-sides of Antony, and the valley of the Bièvre are inhabited by artists who have travelled, by foreigners, by persons difficult to please, and by a number of pretty women who are not without taste, we may suppose that the transient Parisian visitors were right.

But Sceaux possesses another charm in addition to its scenery, not less attractive to Parisians. In the middle of a garden where many delightful points of view are obtained, stands an immense rotunda, open on all sides, the light and airy dome of which is supported by elegant pillars. This rural dais shelters a ballroom. It seldom happens that even the most conventional and proper of the neighboring proprietors and their families do not converge at least once or twice during the season toward this palace of the village Terpsichore, either in brilliant cavalcades, or in light and elegant carriages which cover with dust philosophical pedestrians. The hope of meeting there some women of the great world and being seen by them, the hope (less often betrayed) of meeting young peasant women as demure as judges, brings, Sunday after Sunday, to the ball of Sceaux, swarms of lawyers' clerks, disciples of Esculapius, and other youths whose fresh complexions are discoloring behind the counters of Paris. Quite a number of bourgeois mar-

riages are yearly planned to the sounds of the orchestra, which occupies the centre of the circular hall. If that could speak, what tales of love it might tell!

This interesting medley of classes made the ball of Sceaux, in those days, more spicy and amusing than other rural balls in the neighborhood of Paris, over which its rotunda, the beauty of its site, and the charms of its garden, gave it additional advantages. Émilie at once proclaimed her desire to "play populace" at this lively rural scene, and declared she should take an enormous amount of pleasure in it. Her family were astonished at this fancy for mixing in such a mob; but to play at incognito has always had a singular charm for persons of rank. Mademoiselle de Fontaine expected to derive much amusement from citizen manners; she saw herself leaving in more than one bourgeois soul the memory of a look or a fascinating smile; she laughed to think of the awkward dancing, and she sharpened her pencils in preparation for the scenes with which she expected to enrich her satirical album.

Sunday arrived to put an end to her impatience. The party from Planat made their way on foot to avoid giving annoyance to the rest of the company. The family had dined early. The month of May was a delightful season for such an escapade. Mademoiselle de Fontaine's first sensation was one of surprise at finding under the rotunda a number of persons dancing quadrilles who appeared to belong to the best society. She saw, indeed, here and there, a few young men who had evidently put their month's savings into the joy of shining for this one day; but, on the whole,

there was little of satire to glean and none to harvest. She was amazed to find pleasure arrayed in cambric so much like pleasure robed in satin, and the citizen female dancing with as much grace as the noble lady, sometimes with more. Most of the toilets were simple and becoming. Those of the assembly who represented the lords of the soil, namely, the peasants, kept in the background with remarkable politeness. Mademoiselle Émilie would have been forced to make a study of the various elements composing the scene before discovering the slightest subject of ridicule.

But, as it happened, she had no time for malicious criticism, no leisure to listen for those absurd speeches which satirical minds delight to fasten on. The proud girl suddenly met in the midst of this vast field a flower, — the comparison is in order, — a flower, the color and brilliancy of which acted on her imagination with the prestige of novelty. It sometimes happens that we look at a gown, a curtain, or a bit of white paper so abstractedly that we do not at first see some stain, or some vivid beauty which later strikes our eye as if it had just come to the place where we see it. By a species of moral phenomenon of the same kind, Mademoiselle de Fontaine now beheld in a young man the type of those external perfections she had dreamed of for years.

Seated on one of the common chairs which surrounded the dancing circle, she had carefully placed herself at the extremity of the group formed by her family party, so as to be able to rise and move about as she fancied. She sat there, turning her opera-glass impertinently on all around her, even those in her

*"The stranger, dreamy, and apparently solitary,
leaned lightly against one of the columns."*



immediate vicinity; and she was making remarks as she might have done in a gallery over portraits or genre pictures, when suddenly her eyes were caught by a face which seemed to have been placed there, expressly, in the strongest light, to exhibit a personage out of all proportion with the rest of the scene.

The stranger, dreamy, and apparently solitary, leaned lightly against one of the columns that supported the roof, with his arms folded, slightly bending forward as though a painter were taking his portrait. His attitude, though proud and full of grace, was entirely free from affectation. No gesture showed that he held his face at three-quarters, inclining slightly to the right, like Alexander and like Byron and several other great men, for the purpose of attracting attention. His eyes followed the motions of a lady who was dancing, and their expression betrayed some powerful sentiment. His slim and agile figure recalled the proportions of the Apollo. Fine black hair curled naturally on his high forehead. Mademoiselle de Fontaine, at her first glance, noticed the fineness of his linen, the freshness of his kid gloves, evidently from the best maker, and the smallness of a foot well-shod in a boot of Irish leather. He wore none of those worthless trinkets which a counter-Lovelace or the fops of the National Guard affect. A black ribbon, to which his eyeglass was attached, alone floated over a waistcoat of elegant shape. Never had the exacting Émilie seen the eyes of man shaded by lashes so long and so curving. Melancholy and passion were both in that face, the tone of which was olive, and the features manly. His mouth seemed

ready to smile and to raise the corners of its eloquent lips; but this expression, far from denoting gayety, revealed, on the contrary, a certain graceful sadness. There was too much future promise in that head, too much distinction in the whole person not to make an observer desire to know him; the most perceptive observer would have seen that here was a man of talent, brought to this village ball by some powerful interest.

This mass of observations cost Émilie's quick mind but a moment's attention, during which moment, however, this privileged man, subjected to severe analysis, became the object of her secret admiration. She said to herself, "He is a noble, — he must be." Then she rose suddenly and went, followed by her brother, the lieutenant-general, toward the column on which the stranger leaned, pretending to watch the quadrille, but not losing, thanks to an optical manœuvre familiar to woman, a single one of the young man's movements as she approached him. The stranger politely yielded his place to the new-comers and went to another column, against which he leaned. Émilie, more piqued at this civility than she would have been by an impertinence, began to talk to her brother in a raised tone of voice, louder than good taste admitted. She nodded and shook her head, multiplied her gestures, and laughed without much reason, far less to amuse her brother than to attract the attention of the imperturbable stranger. None of these little artifices succeeded; and then it occurred to Mademoiselle de Fontaine to follow the direction of the young man's glances. On doing so, she saw at once the cause of his absorption.

. In the middle of the quadrille directly before her, a pale young girl was dancing, who was like those Scottish deities whom Girodet has painted in his vast composition of French warriors received by Ossian. Émilie thought at first she must either be or belong to a distinguished lady who had lately come to occupy a neighboring country-house. Her partner was a young man of fifteen, with red hands, nankeen trousers, blue coat, and white shoes, which proved that her love for dancing made her not difficult to please in the matter of partners. Her movements did not show the languor of her apparent feebleness; but a faint flush colored her delicate cheeks and was beginning to spread over her face. Mademoiselle de Fontaine went nearer to the quadrille in order to examine the young stranger when she returned to her place, while the *vis-à-vis* repeated the figure she had just executed. But at this moment the young man advanced, stooped to the pretty dancer, and said, in a masterful, yet gentle tone of voice, these words, which Émilie distinctly overheard:—

“Clara, my child, do not dance any more.”

Clara gave a little pout, nodded her head in sign of acquiescence, and ended by smiling. After the dance . . . was over the young man took all the precautions of a lover in wrapping a cashmere shawl around the girl's shoulders, and making her sit away from the draught. Presently Mademoiselle de Fontaine saw them rise and walk round the enclosure like persons intending to take their departure, and she followed them hastily, under pretence of admiring the views from the garden. Her brother lent himself with malicious good-humor

to the various caprices of this vagabond ramble. Émilie soon perceived her elegant couple getting into a tilbury held by a groom on horseback, and at the moment when the young man gathered up the reins she obtained from him one of those glances that are aimlessly cast upon a crowd; next, she had the satisfaction of seeing him turn twice to look at her again. The lady did likewise. Was she jealous?

"I presume that now, having examined the garden thoroughly," said her brother, "we may return to the dance."

"I am willing," she answered. "Do you think that young girl can be a sister of Lady Dudley?"

"Lady Dudley may have a sister staying with her," replied the Baron de Fontaine, "but she can't be a young girl."

The next day Mademoiselle de Fontaine was possessed with a strong desire to ride on horseback. Little by little she brought her old uncle and her brothers to accompany her daily in certain early morning rides, very beneficial, she declared, for her health. She particularly delighted in the country about Lady Dudley's house. But in spite of her cavalry manœuvres she did not find the stranger as promptly as her joyous hopes predicted. Several times she returned to the rural ball, but in vain. The stranger who had fallen from heaven to rule her dreams and adorn them appeared not again. Nothing spurs the dawning love of a young girl like an obstacle; but there was, nevertheless, a moment when Mademoiselle Émilie de Fontaine was on the point of abandoning her strange and secret quest, despairing of the success of an enterprise

the singularity of which may give some idea of her daring character. She might, indeed, have ridden about the neighborhood indefinitely without meeting her unknown hero. Clara — since Clara was the name that Émilie had overheard — was not English; she did not belong to Lady Dudley's household, and the gentleman who accompanied her did not reside near the balmy groves of Châtenay.

One evening, as Émilie was riding alone with her uncle, who enjoyed a cessation of hostilities from his gout during the summer, she met the carriage of Lady Dudley. That illustrious foreigner was accompanied by Monsieur Félix de Vandenesse. Émilie recognized the handsome couple, and her past suppositions were dissolved like a dream. Provoked, like any other woman frustrated in her scheme, she turned her horse and rode so rapidly homeward that her uncle had all the trouble in the world to keep up with her.

"Apparently I'm too old to understand these young things," thought the old sailor as he urged his horse to a gallop. "Or perhaps the youth of these days is n't the same as it was in mine — But what's my niece about now? Look at her, making her horse take short steps, like a gendarme patrolling Paris. Would n't one think she was trying to hem in that worthy fellow, who looks like an author composing poetry? Yes, to be sure, he has an album in his hand! Faith! what a fool I am! no doubt that's the young man we've been chasing all along."

At this thought the old sailor checked the speed of his horse so as to reach his niece as noiselessly as he could. In spite of the veil which years had drawn

before his gray eyes the Comte de Kergarouët saw enough to note the signs of some unusual agitation in the girl, in spite of the indifference she endeavored to assume. Her piercing eyes were fixed in a sort of stupor on the stranger, who was tranquilly walking in front of her.

"That's surely it!" thought the old gentleman. "She is making a stern chase of him, like a pirate after a merchantman. When she loses sight of him she'll be in a fine state at not knowing who he is, whether a marquis or a bourgeois. Ah! those young heads, those young heads! they ought always to have an old wig like me at their elbow —"

Suddenly he set spurs to his horse to startle that of his niece, and passed so rapidly between Émilie and the stranger that he forced the latter to jump back upon the grass that bordered the road. Stopping his horse, the count cried out: —

"Could n't you get out of the way?"

"Ah, pardon me," replied the stranger. "I was not aware it was my place to make excuses for your nearly knocking me down."

"Enough of that, friend!" returned the old sailor, gruffly, in a tone of voice which was meant to be insulting.

At the same time the count raised his whip as if to strike his horse, but he let the end of it touch the shoulder of the young man as he said: —

"The liberals always reason, and the man who reasons ought to be wise."

The young man jumped into the road on hearing the words, and said, in an angry voice: —

"Monsieur, I can hardly believe, seeing your white hair, that you still amuse yourself by seeking duels —"

"White hair!" cried the sailor, interrupting him; "you lie in your throat; it is only gray."

A dispute thus begun became, in a few seconds, so hot that the young adversary forgot the tone of moderation he tried to use. At this moment Émilie rode anxiously back to them, and the count gave his name hurriedly to the young man, telling him to say nothing more in presence of the lady who was intrusted to his care. The young stranger could not help smiling, but he gave his card to the old gentleman, remarking that he lived in a country-house at Chevreuse, after which he disappeared rapidly.

"You came near killing that poor fellow, niece," said the count, riding up to Émilie. "Why don't you hold your horse in hand? You left me to compromise my dignity in order to cover your folly; whereas if you had stayed on the spot one of your looks or civil words, which you can say prettily enough when you don't want to be impertinent, would have mended matters even if you had broken his arm."

"My dear uncle, it was your horse, not mine, that caused the accident. I really think you ought to give up riding; you are not half so good a horseman as you were last year. But instead of talking about trifles —"

"Trifles! the devil! Do you call it a trifle to be impertinent to your uncle?"

"— we had much better follow that young man and see if he is hurt. He is limping, uncle, see!"

"No, he is running. I gave him a good lesson."

"Ah! uncle, that was just like you."

"Stop, niece," said the count, catching Émilie's horse by the bridle. "I don't see the necessity of running after some shopkeeper, who may think himself only too happy to be run down by a pretty young girl and the commander of the 'Belle-Poule.'"

"Why do you think he is a shopkeeper, uncle? I think, on the contrary, that his manners are very distinguished."

"Everybody has manners in these days."

"Everybody has not the air and style of social life; I'll lay a wager with you that that young man is noble."

"You did n't have time to examine him."

"But it is n't the first time I have seen him."

"Ha, ha!" laughed her uncle; "and it is n't the first time you have hunted for him, either."

Émilie colored, and her uncle amused himself by leaving her a while embarrassed; then he said:—

"Émilie, you know I love you as my own child, because you are the only one of the family who keeps the legitimate pride of high birth. Ah! my little niece, who'd have thought good principles would have become so rare? Well, I wish to be your confidant. My dear little girl, I see you are not indifferent to that young gentleman. You know what that means. Therefore, let me help you. Let us both keep the secret, and I'll promise to introduce him to you in a salon."

"When, uncle?"

"To-morrow."

"But, my dear uncle, you won't bind me to anything?"

"To nothing at all; you can bombard him, set fire to him, make a wreck of him if you please. And he won't be the first, either."

"How kind you are, uncle."

As soon as the count got home he put on his spectacles, pulled the card from his pocket, and read the name, "Maximilien Longueville, rue du Sentier."

"You need n't feel uneasy," he said later to Émilie; "you can harpoon him in safety; he belongs to one of the great historical families, and if he is n't peer of France now he can certainly become so."

"What makes you think so?"

"That 's my secret."

"Do you know his name?"

The count nodded his gray head, which was something like an old oak stump, around which a few autumn leaves were clinging. At that nod his niece ran to him to try the ever fresh effect of her coquetries. Learned in the art of cajoling the old sailor, she coaxed him like a child with the tenderest words. She even went so far as to kiss him, in order to obtain the important secret. But the old man, who passed his life in making his niece play such scenes, let her entreat and pet him for a long time. Presently she grew angry and sulked; then, under the spur of curiosity, she coaxed again. The diplomatic mariner first obtained her solemn promise to behave with more discretion, to be more gentle, less self-willed, to spend less money, and, above all, to tell him everything. This treaty being concluded and signed by a kiss

which he deposited on Émilie's white forehead, he seated her on his knee, placed the card before her eyes, with his two thumbs covering the print, and let her make out, letter by letter, the name of Longueville, obstinately refusing to show her more.

This event made the secret sentiments of Mademoiselle de Fontaine even more intense, and she spent the greater part of the night in picturing to her mind's eye the brilliant dreams with which she fed her hopes. Thanks to chance, so often invoked, Emilie now saw something besides a mere chimera in her visions of conjugal life. Like all young girls, who are ignorant of the risks of love and marriage, she was captivated by the deceitful externals of the two conditions. In other words, her sentiments were like other caprices of early youth, sweet but cruel errors which exercise a fatal influence on the existence of girls who are inexperienced enough to take upon their own shoulders the responsibility of their future happiness.

The next morning, before Émilie was awake, her uncle had ridden to Chevreuse. Finding in the courtyard of an elegant country-house the young man he had so wantonly insulted the night before, he went up to him with the affectionate politeness of the old men of the olden time.

"My dear monsieur," he said, "could any one believe that I should, at the age of sixty-three, get up a quarrel with the son of one of my oldest friends? I am a vice-admiral, monsieur; which is proof enough that I think no more of fighting a duel than of smoking a cigar. In my day, young fellows couldn't be friends till they had seen the color of each other's

blood. But, *ventre-de-biche!* I had, you must know, taken a trifle too much grog aboard, and I ran foul of you. Shake hands! I'd rather receive a hundred rebuffs from a Longueville than give the slightest pain to any of the family."

Though at first the young man was inclined to be cold to the Comte de Kergarouët, it was impossible to hold out long against his hearty manner, and he allowed himself to be shaken by the hand.

"You are going out," said the count; "don't let me detain you. But, unless you have other plans, come and dine with me to-day at the Pavillon Planat. My nephew, the Comte de Fontaine, is a man you ought to know. And, besides, *morbleu!* I want to repair my rudeness by presenting you to four or five of the prettiest women of Paris. Ha, ha! young man, your brow unclouds! Well, I like young people, and I want to see them happy. Their happiness reminds me of those blessed days of youth when adventures were never lacking. Gay! oh, we were gay then, I can tell you. Nowadays, you reason, you worry about all sorts of things, as if there had never been a fifteenth or sixteenth century."

"But, monsieur, are not we right to do so? The sixteenth century gave Europe religious liberty only, whereas the nineteenth will give her poli —

"Stop, stop, don't talk politics. I'm an old foggy of an ultra. But for all that, I don't prevent young fellows from being revolutionists, provided they allow the king to disperse their meetings."

Riding on together a little way, the count and his companion were soon in the heart of the woods. The

old sailor selected a slim young birch, stopped his horse, pulled out a pistol, and sent a ball through its stem at forty paces.

"You see, my dear fellow, that I have no reason to fear a duel," he remarked, with comic gravity, as he looked at Monsieur Longueville.

"Nor I, either," said the young man, pulling out his own pistol. Aiming for the count's hole he put his ball close beside it.

"That's what I call a well brought-up young man," cried the count, with enthusiasm.

During this ride with the man he already regarded as his nephew, he found several opportunities to make inquiries as to those trifling accomplishments the possession of which constituted, according to his peculiar code, a finished gentleman.

"Have you any debts?" he asked, finally, after a variety of other questions.

"No, monsieur."

"What! you pay for what you buy!"

"Punctually, monsieur; otherwise we should lose our credit and standing."

"But of course you have a mistress? Ah! you blush, young man. How times have changed, to be sure! With these ideas of legality, Kantism, liberty, youth is spoiled. You have neither Guimard, nor Duthé, nor creditors, and you don't know heraldry! Why, my dear young friend, you are not *brought-up* at all! Let me tell you that he who does n't commit his follies in the spring is certain to commit them in winter. If I have eighty thousand francs a year at seventy it is because I ran through my capital at thirty — Oh!

with my wife, honorably. Nevertheless your imperfections will not prevent me from presenting you at the Pavillon Planat. Remember that you have promised to come, and I shall expect you."

"What an odd little man!" thought Longueville; "he is lively and robust, but — though he tries to seem kindly, I shall not trust him."

The next day, about four o'clock, as the family party were scattered about in the salons and billiard-room at Planat, a servant announced: —

"Monsieur *de Longueville*."

Having already heard of him from the Comte de Kergarouët, the whole company, even to a billiard-player who missed his stroke, gathered to see the newcomer, as much to watch Mademoiselle de Fontaine's face as to judge of the phoenix who had won the day in defiance of so many rivals. Manners that were full of ease, courteous politeness, a style of dress both elegant and simple, and a voice which vibrated to the heart of all hearers at once obtained for Monsieur Longueville the good-will of the whole family. He did not seem unused to the luxury now about him. Though his conversation was that of a man of the world, it was easy to see that he had received a brilliant education, and that his knowledge was solid and also extensive. He used, for instance, the proper technical word in a slight discussion which the count started on naval constructions, which led one of the women present to remark that he must have been educated at the *École Polytechnique*.

"I agree with you, madame," he replied, "that it is an honor to have been educated there."

In spite of much urging, he declined politely, but firmly, the urgent invitation of the family that he should stay to dinner; and he put an end to all remarks from the ladies by saying that he was the Hippocrates of a young sister whose delicate health required incessant watching.

"Monsieur is perhaps a physician?" said one of Émilie's sisters-in-law, rather maliciously.

"No, monsieur was educated at the École Polytechnique," interposed Mademoiselle de Fontaine, whose face had brightened with the richest tints on hearing that the lady she had seen at the ball was Monsieur Longueville's sister.

"But, my dear sister, a man can be educated at the École Polytechnique and yet be a physician. Isn't that so, monsieur?"

"Madame, the two things are not incompatible," replied the young man.

All eyes rested on Émilie, who looked with a sort of uneasy curiosity at the attractive stranger. She breathed more freely when he added, with a smile, —

"I have not the honor of being a physician, madame, and I have even declined an opportunity to enter the government service, in order to maintain my independence."

"And you did right," said the count. "But how can you call it an honor to be a doctor? Ah! my young friend, for a man like you —"

"Monsieur le comte, I feel infinite respect for all professions that are useful."

"I'll agree to that; you respect professions, I suspect, as other young men respect dowagers."

Monsieur Longueville's visit was neither too long nor too short. He withdrew at the moment when he had pleased every one and when the curiosity of all was fairly roused.

"That's a sly fellow," said the count, returning to the salon, after seeing the young man to the door.

Mademoiselle de Fontaine, who alone was in the secret of this visit, had made a somewhat choice toilet to attract the eyes of the young man; but she had the small annoyance of perceiving that he paid her less attention than she thought her due. The family were a good deal surprised at the silence into which she retired. Usually Émilie displayed her coquettish charms, her clever chatter, and the inexhaustible eloquence of her glances and her attitudes on each new-comer. Whether it was that the musical voice of the young man and the attraction of his manners had seriously charmed her, and that this real sentiment had given her a change of heart, it is certain that her behavior lost all affectation. Becoming simple and natural she was all the more beautiful. Some of her sisters, and an old lady, a friend of the family, saw a refinement of coquetry in this conduct. They supposed that finding a young man worthy of her she intended to show him slowly her charms, and then to dazzle him suddenly when her mind was made up.

Every member of the family was curious to know what the capricious girl thought of the stranger; but when, during dinner, they each took occasion to endow Monsieur Longueville with some fresh merit, Mademoiselle de Fontaine was mute until a slight sarcasm from her uncle roused her suddenly from her apathy;

she then said, in a pointed manner, that such celestial perfections must cover some great defect, and that for her part she should be careful not to judge of so clever a man at first sight.

"Those who please every one please no one in particular," she added; "and the worst of all defects is to have none."

Like all young girls who fall in love, Émilie fondly hoped to hide her feelings in her heart by misleading the Argus eyes that surrounded her; but at the end of a fortnight there was not a single member of this numerous family who was not initiated into her secret.

At Monsieur Longueville's third visit Émilie felt that she attracted him. This discovery gave her such intoxicating pleasure that she felt surprised at herself when she reflected on it. There was something humiliating to her pride in it. Accustomed to feel herself the centre of the world she lived in, she was now obliged to recognize a power which controlled her in spite of herself. She tried to rebel against it, but she was wholly unable to drive from her heart the seductive image of the young man. Then came uneasiness. Two characteristics of Monsieur Longueville were very unwelcome, both to the general curiosity and that of Mademoiselle de Fontaine in particular; namely, his discretion and his modesty. He never spoke of himself, or of his family, or his occupations. In spite of the traps which Émilie repeatedly laid for him in conversation, he managed to evade them all with the cleverness of a diplomatist who means to keep his secret. If she talked of painting, Monsieur Longueville replied as a connoisseur. If

she tried music, the young man showed, without conceit, that he could play the piano fairly well. One evening he delighted the company by blending his delightful voice with that of Émilie in one of Cimarosa's fine duets. But if any one attempted to discover whether he were an artist of any kind, he joked about his accomplishments with so much grace that he left these women, practised as they were in the art of divining such secrets, unable to discover the social sphere to which he belonged. No matter with what vigor the old admiral flung a grapnel to the vessel, Longueville managed to slip by it with a suppleness which preserved the charm of mystery; and it was all the more easy for him to keep his incognito at the Pavillon Planât, because the curiosity he there aroused never exceeded the limits of politeness.

Émilie, tortured by this reserve, fancied she might get more from the sister than from the brother, and she now attempted, with the help of her uncle, to bring that hitherto mute personage, Mademoiselle Clara Longueville, on the scene. The society at the Pavillon expressed an extreme desire to know so amiable a young lady and to afford her some amusement. An informal ball was proposed and accepted, and the ladies felt certain of getting the truth from a girl of sixteen.

In spite of these little clouds of doubt, a vivid light had entered the soul of Mademoiselle de Fontaine, who found a new and delightful charm in life when connected with another being besides herself. She began to conceive the true nature of social relations. Whether happiness makes better beings of us, or

whether her mind was too occupied to tease and harass others, it is certain that she became less caustic, gentler and more indulgent. This change in her character delighted the astonished family. Perhaps, after all, her selfishness was to turn into love. Merely to expect the arrival of her reserved adorer was joy. Though a single word of passion had never passed between them she knew herself loved. With what art she now enabled her unknown lover to display his accomplishments and the treasures of an education that was evidently varied. Conscious that she herself was being carefully observed, she felt her defects and tried to conquer those which her training had so fatally encouraged. It was indeed a first homage paid to love, and a bitter reproach which her awakened heart made to itself. The result was that, wanting to please, she fascinated; she loved, and was idolized.

Her family, knowing how amply her pride protected her, allowed her enough liberty to enjoy those little youthful happinesses which give such charm and such vigor to young love. More than once the young man and Émilie walked alone about the shrubbery of the park, where nature was decked like beauty for a ball. More than once they held those vague and aimless conversations the emptiest words of which conceal the deepest sentiments. Together they admired the setting sun and its glowing colors. They gathered daisies to pluck the leaves; they sang the passionate duets of Pergolesi and Rossini, using those notes as faithful interpreters to express their secret feelings.

III.

IN WHICH THE WORST COMES TO THE WORST.

THE day of the ball arrived. Clara Longueville and her brother, whom the footmen persisted in decorating with the particle, were the heroes of it. For the first time in her life Mademoiselle de Fontaine saw the triumph of another girl with pleasure. She lavished, in all sincerity, upon Clara, those pretty caresses and attentions which women often show to each other to excite the jealousy of men. Émilie had an object of her own, however; she wanted to obtain the secret. But Mademoiselle Longueville proved to have even more discretion and more cleverness than her brother, for she did not even seem to be reserved,—keeping the conversation away from personal interests, but giving it so great a charm on other subjects that Mademoiselle de Fontaine felt a sort of envy, and called her “the siren.” Though Émilie’s intention was to question Clara, it was Clara who questioned Émilie; she wanted to judge the girl, and the girl judged her; she was even provoked with herself for letting her real self appear in certain answers cleverly drawn out of her by Clara, whose modest and innocent air precluded all suspicion of malice. At one moment Émilie seemed really angry at having made an attack upon plebeians, which Clara herself had provoked.

"Mademoiselle," said the charming girl, "I have heard so much of you from Maximilien that I have longed to know you; and to know you must be, I think, to love you."

"Dear Clara, I was afraid I displeased you just now, in speaking as I did of those who are not noble."

"Oh, no; don't be troubled. In these days such discussions have no point; and as for me, I am outside of that question."

This answer gave Mademoiselle de Fontaine the utmost satisfaction, for she interpreted it as people interpret oracles, to suit themselves. She looked at Maximilien, whose elegance surpassed even that of her imaginary type, and her soul was filled with joy at the knowledge at last obtained that he was noble. Never did the two lovers understand each other so well as at this moment; more than once their hands trembled as they met in the figures of the dance.

Autumn came in the midst of fêtes and rural pleasures, during which the charming couple let themselves float upon the current of the sweetest of all sentiments, strengthening that sentiment in a thousand little ways which every one can imagine, for all loves resemble one another on certain points. Also they studied each other's characters, as much as persons can study each other when they love.

"Well, never did a fancy turn into a love-match so rapidly," said the old uncle, who watched the proceedings of the young pair as a naturalist watches an insect through his microscope.

The words alarmed Monsieur and Madame de Fontaine. The old Vendéan was not as indifferent to his

daughter's marriage as he had lately professed to be. He went to Paris to make inquiries, and obtained no results. Uneasy at such evident mystery, and before he could hear the result of certain inquiries he had set on foot in Paris, he thought it his duty to warn his daughter to behave with more caution. This paternal advice was received with a show of obedience that was evidently ironical.

"But at least, my dear Émilie, if you love him don't let him see it."

"Papa, it is true that I love him, but I shall wait for your permission to tell him so."

"But reflect, Émilie, that you don't know anything as yet about his family or his station."

"I don't mind that. But, papa, you wished to see me married; you gave me liberty to choose, and I have chosen — what more can you want?"

"I want to know, my dear, if the man you have chosen is the son of a peer of France," replied her father, sarcastically.

Émilie was silent for a moment. Then she raised her head, looked at her father, and said, with some anxiety: —

"Who are the Longuevilles?"

"The family became extinct in the person of the old Duc de Rostein-Limbourg, who perished on the scaffold in 1793. He was the last scion of the last youngest branch."

"But, papa, there are several good houses descended from bastards. The history of France swarms with princes who bear the bar sinister."

"Your ideas seemed to have changed," said the old noble, smiling.

The next day was the last which the Fontaine family were to spend at Planat. Émilie, whom the advice of her father had a good deal disquieted, impatiently awaited the hour of young Longueville's usual visit, being determined to obtain some definite explanation from him. She went out alone after dinner, and made her way to a grove in the park where she knew her lover would be sure to search for her. As she went along, she thought over the best means of obtaining, without committing herself, a secret so important; a difficult thing to do. Until now, no direct avowal had sanctioned the feelings which united her to this man. She had, like Maximilien, enjoyed the delights of unspoken love, but proud as they were, it seemed as though both shrank from acknowledging their feelings.

Maximilien Longueville, in whom Clara had inspired certain well-founded suspicions on Émilie's nature, felt himself alternately driven onward by the violence of his passion, and restrained by the desire to know and test a woman to whom he was about to confide the happiness of his life. His love did not prevent him from seeing in Émilie the faults and prejudices which injured her youthful character; but he desired to know whether he was truly loved by her in spite of them, before speaking to her; he would not risk the fate of either his love or his life. He therefore maintained an outward silence, which his looks and attitudes and slightest actions contradicted.

On the other hand, the pride natural to a young girl, increased in Mademoiselle de Fontaine by the foolish vanity of her birth and beauty, prevented her from

meeting half-way the declaration which her growing passion sometimes urged her to bring about. Thus these lovers had instinctively understood their mutual situation without explaining their secret motives. There are moments in life when the vague gives pleasure to young souls.

Seated on a rustic bench, Émilie now thought over the events of these three enchanting months. Her father's doubts were the last fears that could touch her, and even these she set aside by arguments which to an inexperienced girl seemed triumphant. In the first place, she convinced herself that it was impossible she should be deceived. During the whole summer she had never detected in Maximilien a look, or word or gesture which indicated a vulgar origin or occupation; more than that, his manner of discussing topics proved that he was a man whose mind was occupied with the highest interests of the nation. "Besides," she thought to herself, "a clerk, a banker, or a merchant would not have leisure to spend a whole summer in making love to me in the fields and woods; he spends his time as idly as a noble whose life is free of care." Then she abandoned herself to a course of meditation far more interesting to her than these preliminary thoughts, and was thus engaged when a slight rustling of the foliage let her know that Maximilien was looking at her, no doubt with admiration.

"Don't you know that it is very wrong to come suddenly upon girls in that way?" she said, smiling.

"Above all when they are thinking about their secrets," replied Maximilien, slyly.

"Why should n't I have secrets?" she asked. "You have plenty of your own."

"Were you really thinking of your secrets?" he said, laughing.

"No, I was thinking of yours. I know all about mine."

"But," said the young man, gently taking the girl's arm and placing it in his, "perhaps my secrets are yours, and your secrets mine."

After walking a few steps they reached a grove of trees which the setting sun was wrapping in a mist, as it were, of reds and browns. This natural magic seemed to give solemnity to the moment. The eyes of the lovers had never before told each other so many things that their lips dared not say. In the grasp of this sweet intoxication they forgot the small conventions of pride and the cold calculations of their mutual distrust. At first they could only express their emotions by clasping hands, and so interpreting their happy thoughts.

"Monsieur, I have a question to ask you," said Mademoiselle de Fontaine, after a long silence, in a trembling voice, as they slowly paced onward. "But remember, I entreat you, that it is, as it were, forced upon me by the situation in which I stand with my family."

A pause that was terrifying to Émilie followed these words which she almost stammered. During the moment that this silence lasted the girl, hitherto so proud, dared not meet the burning glance of the man she loved, for she was conscious in her heart of the baseness of the words she added: —

"Are you noble?"

When they had left her lips she wished herself at the bottom of a lake.

"Mademoiselle," replied Longueville, gravely, his face assuming a sort of stern dignity, "I will answer that question without evasion when you have answered with sincerity the one I now put to you."

He dropped the arm of the young girl, who suddenly felt alone in the world, and said, "Why do you question me about my birth?" She was motionless, cold, and silent. "Mademoiselle," he went on, "let us go no farther if we do not comprehend each other. I love you," he added, in a deep and tender tone. "Well, then!" he continued, on hearing the exclamation of joy which the girl could not restrain, "why ask me if I am noble?"

"Could he speak thus if he were not," cried an inward voice which Émilie believed to have come from the depths of her heart. She raised her head gracefully, seemed to gather a new life in the look the young man gave her, and held out her arm to him as though to make a new alliance.

"You must think I care much for worldly dignities," she said.

"I have no titles to offer to my wife," he replied, half in jest and half in earnest. "But if I choose her in the highest rank and among those who are accustomed to luxury and the pleasures of opulence, I know to what my choice obliges me. Love gives all," he added, gayly, "but to lovers only. Married people want more than the heavens above them and the velvet of the turf at their feet."

"He is rich," thought she. "As for titles, perhaps he wants to test me. They have probably told him I was fanatical about nobility, and would only marry a

peer of France. My cats of sisters may have played me just such a trick. I assure you, monsieur," she said aloud, "that although I have had exacting ideas as to life and society, I now," glancing at him in a manner to turn his head, "know where a woman should look for her real happiness."

"I trust that you speak sincerely," he answered, with gentle gravity. "Next winter, my dear Émilie, in less than two months, perhaps, I shall be able to offer you the enjoyments of wealth. What this means is a secret I am compelled to keep for the present. On its success depends my happiness; I dare not say *ours* —"

"Oh! say it, say it!" she exclaimed.

With many tender thoughts and words they slowly returned to the house and joined the company in the salon. Never had Mademoiselle de Fontaine seen her lover so lovable, so pleasing; his slim form, his engaging manners seemed to her more charming than ever. They sang together in Italian, with such expression that the company applauded enthusiastically. Their final adieu was made in a formal tone which covered a secret happiness. This day was to the young girl a chain which bound her more closely than ever to the destiny of the man she had chosen. The force and dignity he displayed in the scene we have just related, and in which their mutual sentiments had been revealed, may have inspired Mademoiselle de Fontaine with a sense of respect without which no true love exists.

Later in the evening, being alone with her father and uncle in the salon, the former came up to her,

took her hands affectionately, and asked if she had obtained any light as to the family and fortune of Monsieur Longueville.

"Yes, my dear father," she replied, "and I am happier than I ever thought to be. Monsieur de Longueville is the only man I ever wished to marry."

"Very good, Émilie," replied her father; "then I know what I must do."

"Do you know of any obstacle?" she asked, in real anxiety.

"My dear child, this young man is absolutely unknown; but, unless he is a dishonest man, he is dear to me as a son, because you love him."

"Dishonest!" cried Emilie; "oh! I am easy about that. My uncle, who introduced him to me, knows that much, at least. Tell me, uncle dear, has he ever been a pirate, a filibuster, a corsair?"

"Ah! I knew I should come to this!" exclaimed the old sailor, waking up from a nap.

He looked about the salon, but his niece had disappeared, — like Castor and Pollux, to use one of his own expressions.

"Well, uncle," said Monsieur de Fontaine, "why have you hidden from us all this time what you know of this young man? You must have seen what was going on. Is Monsieur de Longueville of good family?"

"I don't know him from Adam," cried the admiral. "Trusting to the tact of that wilful girl I brought her the Saint-Preux she wanted, by means known to myself alone. All I know about the lad is that he is a fine shot, hunts well, plays a marvellous game of bil-

liards, also chess and backgammon; and he fences and rides like the Chevalier de Saint-Georges. Also he has a most amazing erudition about vineyards; and he can cipher like Barême, and draws and dances and sings well. What the devil do you want else? If that is n't all a perfect gentleman need be, show me a bourgeois who knows as much, or a man who lives more nobly than he. You see for yourself he does n't do anything. Does he compromise his dignity in an office, and bow down to parvenus, as you call directors-general? No, he walks erect. He's a man. But here, by the bye, in the pocket of my waistcoat is the card he gave me when he thought, poor innocent! that I wanted to cut his throat. Ha! young men nowadays have n't any tricks in their bag. Here's the card."

"Rue du Sentier, number 5," said Monsieur de Fontaine, trying to remember that address among the various pieces of information he had obtained from his inquiries. "What the devil does that mean? Palma, Werbrust and company, wholesale dealers in muslins, calicos, and printed cottons of all kinds live there — Ah! I have it! Longueville, the deputy, has an interest in that firm. Yes, but I know Longueville has a son thirty-two years old, not the least like this man, to whom he has just given fifty thousand a year in order to marry him to the daughter of a minister; he wants to be made a peer like all the rest. I never heard him mention a son called Maximilien. And he has n't a daughter, so far as I know. Who is this Clara? Besides, it is open to any adventurer to call himself Longueville, or anything else he likes. I'll make some inquiries about Palma and Werbrust."

"You talk as if you held the stage alone," cried the old admiral. "Do you count me for nothing? Don't you know that if he is a gentleman I've got more than one sack in my lockers to repair his lack of fortune?"

"As for that, if he is Longueville the deputy's son, he needs nothing; but," added Monsieur de Fontaine, shaking his head from right to left, "he has n't even bought a property which carries a title. Before the Revolution he was only an attorney, and the *de* he has stuck on since the Restoration no more belongs to him than one half of his wealth."

"Ah, bah! happy those whose fathers were hanged!" cried the old sailor, gayly.

Three or four days later, on one of those fine days in November when Parisians find the pavement of their boulevard cleansed by a slight touch of frost, Mademoiselle de Fontaine, wearing a set of new furs which she wished to make the fashion, had gone out shopping with two of her sisters-in-law, the two whom she was most inclined to ridicule. The three ladies were induced to make this expedition less to exhibit an elegant new carriage and dresses in the latest style, than to see a certain pelerine that one of their friends had remarked in the large lace and linen shop at the corner of the rue de la Paix.

As the three sisters entered the shop the Baronne de Fontaine pulled Émilie by the sleeve and pointed out to her Maximilien Longueville behind the counter, occupied at that moment in receiving money from the mistress of the shop, with whom he seemed to be conferring. In his hand he held several patterns which left no doubt as to the nature of his occupation.

Émilie was seized with a cold shudder, fortunately unperceived. Thanks to the *savoir-vivre* of good society, she hid the fury in her heart and replied to her sister with the words, "I knew it," in a richness of tone and with an inimitable accent which might have made the fortune of an actress on the stage.

She advanced to the counter; Longueville raised his head, put the patterns in his pocket with perfect self-possession, bowed to Mademoiselle de Fontaine, and came out to meet her, giving her, as he did so, a penetrating look.

"Madame," he said to the mistress of the shop, who had followed anxiously, "I will send the money for this bill. My firm prefers to do business in that way. But here," he added, in a whisper, "is a thousand-franc note — take it; we will settle the matter between us later. You will, I hope, pardon me, mademoiselle," he said, turning back to Émilie, "and be so kind as to excuse the tyranny of business."

"It seems to me, monsieur, that the matter is one to which I am totally indifferent," replied Mademoiselle de Fontaine, looking at him with a vacant air which might have led a spectator to think she saw him for the first time.

"Are you speaking seriously?" asked Maximilien, in a broken voice.

For all answer Émilie turned her back upon him with inconceivable rudeness. These few words, said in a low voice, had escaped the notice of the sisters-in-law. When, after having purchased the pelerine, the three ladies returned to their carriage, Émilie, who was sitting on the front seat, could not refrain from glanc-

ing into the depths of that odious shop, where she saw Maximilien standing with his arms crossed, in the attitude of a man superior to the trouble which had come upon him so suddenly. Their eyes met, and each gave to the other an implacable look. Each hoped to cruelly wound the other's heart. In a moment they found themselves as far apart as if one were in China, the other in Greenland. The breath of worldliness had withered all!

A prey to the most violent struggle that ever went on in the heart of a young girl, Mademoiselle de Fontaine gathered the amplest harvest of bitter fruits which prejudice and pettiness ever sowed in a human soul. Her face, fresh and velvety a few moments earlier, was furrowed with yellow tones and red stains, and even the white of her cheeks turned greenish. In the hope of hiding her trouble from her sisters she ridiculed the passers in the street or laughed at a costume; but the laugh was convulsive. She was more deeply wounded by the silent compassion of her sisters than she would have been by the sharpest sarcasms which she might have revenged. She taxed her whole mind to drag them into a conversation in which she vented her anger in senseless paradoxes of the worst taste. On reaching home she became really ill, and was seized with a fever which at first showed dangerous symptoms. At the end of a month, however, the care of her family and her physician restored her entirely. Every one hoped that the lesson would subdue her self-will; but she declared there was no shame in having made a mistake, and she once more flung herself into society and returned to her former habits of life. If,

she said, she had, like her father, influence in the Chamber, she would pass a law that all merchants and shopkeepers should be branded on the forehead, like the sheep of Berry, to the third generation; it was a great injury to the monarchy that there was no visible difference between a merchant and a peer of France.

A hundred other such jests were poured out rapidly when any unforeseen accident started the topic. But those who loved her were conscious through her sarcasms of a tone of melancholy. Evidently Maximilien Longueville still reigned at the bottom of that inexplicable heart. Sometimes she would be gentle and sweet as she had been during the brief period when her love was born, and then again she would make herself intolerable. Her family excused these variations of temper, knowing that they had their rise in sufferings known and unknown. The Comte de Kergarouët alone obtained some slight control over her, and this was partly by gifts and amusements, a species of consolation which seldom misses its effect on a Parisian girl.

The first ball that Mademoiselle de Fontaine went to that winter was at the house of the Neapolitan ambassador. As she was taking her place in a quadrille she saw, not far from her, Maximilien Longueville, who nodded slightly to her partner.

"Is that young man a friend of yours?" she asked, disdainfully.

"Only my brother," he replied.

Émilie could not help trembling.

"Ah!" continued her partner in a tone of enthusiasm, "he is the noblest soul in the world —"

"Do you know my name?" asked Émilie, interrupting him, hastily.

"No, mademoiselle. It is a crime, I know, not to recollect a name which must be on every lip, or, I should say, in every heart; but my excuse is that I have just returned from Germany. My ambassador, who is in Paris on leave of absence, has sent me here this evening to serve as chaperon to his amiable wife, whom you can see over there in a corner."

"A tragic muse," said Émilie, after examining the ambassadress.

"But that's her ball face," returned the young diplomat, laughing. "I must ask her to dance; that's why I take my consolation now." Mademoiselle de Fontaine made him a little bow. "I am so surprised," continued the chattering secretary, "to see my brother here. On arriving from Vienna I was told he was ill in bed, and I wanted to go to him at once; but diplomacy and politics leave no time for family affections. *La padrona della casa* keeps me in attendance, and gives me no chance to see my poor Maximilien."

"Is your brother, like yourself, in diplomacy?" said Émilie.

"No," said the secretary, sighing. "The poor fellow has sacrificed himself to me. He and my sister Clara have renounced their share of my father's property to make an entail for me. My father is a deputy and expects a peerage for his services to the government. He has the promise of it," added the young man, in a low voice. "My brother, after getting together a little capital, chiefly from our mother's property, has gone into a banking business, and he has just made a speculation in Brazil which is likely to make him a millionaire. I am very happy in the

thought that I have helped him by my diplomatic relations to this success. I am now expecting a despatch from Brazil which I feel sure will clear that gloomy brow of his. Don't you think him handsome?"

"His face does n't seem to me that of a man who spends his thoughts on making money," she replied.

The young diplomatist gave a glance at the seemingly calm face of his partner.

"Ah!" said he, "so young ladies can detect the thoughts of love beneath all foreheads!"

"Is your brother in love?" asked Émilie, in a tone of curiosity.

"Yes. My sister Clara, whom he cares for like a mother, wrote me that he had fallen in love with a very pretty girl; but I have had no further news of the affair. Would you believe it, the poor fellow used to get up at five in the morning so as to get through his business and ride out into the country, where the lady was staying. He ruined a fine thorough-bred horse I had sent him. Forgive my chatter, mademoiselle, I am just from Germany, where I have n't heard a word of pure French spoken; I am so hungry for French faces and sick of Germans that I'd talk, I believe, to the griffins on a candlestick. Besides, the fault is yours, mademoiselle; you asked me about my brother, and when I get on that subject I am irrepressible. I should like to tell the whole earth how good and generous he is. He has given up a hundred thousand francs a year to me from our estates at Longueville."

If Mademoiselle de Fontaine obtained all this information she owed it partly to the cleverness with which she questioned her confiding partner.

"How can you bear to see your brother selling calico and muslins?" asked Émilie, as they finished the third figure of the quadrille.

"How do you know he does?" asked the diplomatist. "Thank heaven! if I do rattle off a flux of words I have learned to say no more than I choose, like the other fledgling diplomatists of my acquaintance."

"I assure you that you told me so."

Monsieur de Longueville looked at Mademoiselle de Fontaine with a surprise that was full of intelligence.

A suspicion entered his mind. He glanced from his partner to his brother, and guessed all; he clapped his hands together, threw up his eyes and began to laugh:—

"I am nothing but a fool," he said. "You are the handsomest person here, my brother is watching you furtively, he is dancing in spite of his illness, and you are pretending not to see him! Make him happy," he added, as he took her back to her old uncle. "I'll not be jealous; though perhaps I shall wince a little at calling you my sister."

However, the two lovers were resolved on being inexorable. About two in the morning a collation was served in a vast gallery, where, in order to allow persons of the same set to be together, the tables were arranged as they are at a restaurant. By one of those accidents which are always happening to lovers Mademoiselle de Fontaine found herself placed at a table adjoining that around which sat some very distinguished persons. Maximilien was among them. Émilie listened with attentive ears to the talk of these neighbors. The companion of the young merchant

was a Neapolitan duchess of great beauty, and the intimacy that he affected to have with her was all the more wounding to Mademoiselle de Fontaine because at that moment she was conscious of a tenfold deeper tenderness for her lover than she had ever felt before.

"Yes, monsieur, in my country, true love can make all kinds of sacrifices," the duchess was saying in a mincing way.

"You Italians are far more loving than Frenchwomen," said Maximilien, looking full at Émilie. "They are all vanity."

"Monsieur," said Émilie, quickly, "it is an ill thing to calumniate your country. Devotion belongs to all lands."

"Do you think, mademoiselle," said the duchess, with a sarcastic smile, "that a Parisian woman would be capable of following her lover everywhere?"

"Ah! understand me, madame; she would follow him to the desert and live in tents, but not behind the counter of a shop."

Émilie emphasized these words with a gesture of disdain. Thus the influence exercised over the girl by her fatal education killed her dawning happiness twice, and made her life a failure. The apparent coldness of Maximilien and the smile of a woman, drew from her a sarcasm the treacherous delight of which she could not deny herself.

"Mademoiselle," said Longueville, in a low voice, under cover of the noise the women made when rising from table, "no one will ever offer more ardent wishes for your happiness than I. Permit me to give you this

assurance on taking leave of you. I start in a few days for Italy."

"With a duchess, I suppose."

"No, mademoiselle, with what may prove a mortal illness."

"Is that a fancy?" asked Émilie, giving him an uneasy glance.

"No," he answered, "for there are wounds that never heal."

"You will not go," said the imperious young girl, with a smile.

"I shall go," returned Longueville, gravely.

"You will find me married on your return, I warn you," she said, coquettishly.

"I hope so."

"Impertinent man!" she said to herself; "he takes a cruel vengeance."

A fortnight later Maximilien Longueville started with his sister Clara for the balmy and poetic regions of *la bella Italia*, leaving Mademoiselle de Fontaine a victim to bitter regrets. The young secretary of legation took up his brother's quarrel, and revenged him publicly by telling everywhere the reasons for the rupture. The Comte de Fontaine was obliged to use his credit at court to obtain for Auguste Longueville a mission to Russia to protect his daughter from the ridicule this young and dangerous persecutor heaped upon her.

Not long after, the administration was compelled to make a new batch of peers to strengthen the aristocratic body in the Upper Chamber, which was beginning to totter under the voice of an illustrious writer;

and distinction. The death of his father, and that of his brother (killed by the climate of St. Petersburg) had placed upon his head the hereditary plumes of the peerage; his fortune was equal to his station and his acquirements; only the evening before, his fiery eloquence had electrified the Chamber. At this moment he appeared before the eyes of the sad countess, free, and adorned with all the advantages she had formerly demanded in her ideal lover; and more than all, Émilie knew well that the Vicomte de Longueville possessed that firmness of character in which a woman of sense sees the strongest pledge of happiness. She cast her eyes upon the admiral, who, to use his own expression, was likely to swing at anchor for a long time to come, and she cursed the follies and errors of her youth.

Just then Monsieur de Persépolis remarked with his episcopal grace, —

“My dear lady, you have thrown away the king of hearts, and I win. But don’t regret your money; I keep it for my ragged schools.”

THE END.

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